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ANECDOTES
OF THE
ALTAMONT FAMILY.

A NOVEL.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY
THE AUTHOR OF THE SICILIAN, &c.

“ How shall I ’scape the stings of my own conscience ?
“ Which will for ever rack me with remembrance,
“ Haunt me by day, and torture me by night.”

L.L.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
PRINTED AT THE
Minerva-Press,
FOR WILLIAM LANE, LEADENHALL-STREET.
1800.



ANECDOTES

OF THE

ALTAMONT FAMILY.

CHAP. I.

LORD FITZARRAN was upon the beach where his house stood, anxiously waiting their arrival; and so unwilling to lose sight of his newly-acquired young friend, he chose to accompany him to witness the Officers' and Henry's embarkation; and having seen them under sail, with a very fair wind, they adjourned to his Lordship's

villa, which commanded a very fine view of Portsmouth, St. Helens, Southampton River, and the New Forest.—“ Here I have pitched my tent for the present,” said his Lordship, as soon as they were seated in his saloon. “ I believe I told you last night I came hither for various reasons; first, to consult my friend O’Hallaran upon some family affairs; and lastly, to get out of the way of doctors and apothecaries, who are as great rogues as lawyers, and fleece us poor invalids with as little compunction as the others do their clients. However, as I told you before, and now repeat, I ought to be very thankful it has pleased God to spare my life so long. I hope I shall make a proper use of this short respite, and that when I do make my exit, my successor will grace, as much as I disgrace, a title. Therefore, if I do but properly establish his claims, no matter how soon I am food for the worms; for of what use are riches and honour to a man who can enjoy neither? But I have no right to repine; I have had my

my day, and I always filled my post with honour to myself, and ever tried to serve my King and country to the best of my slender abilities; yet I know I have neglected many private duties. You must be unacquainted with my family history, for I am but very lately returned to my native country, having come to my present title upon the death of a very distant relation. Now the devil burn me if I know what I would be after saying, for my brain is all of a whirl. I saw I almost affronted you last night with my cross questions. I certainly am a very queer mortal, but I am sure I never willingly offended either man, woman, or child; yet I have been obliged in my time to fight five duels only for misplacing a word or so, which I positively would not have done, had I known how to express myself to their liking. My fighting days, however, are all over, so you must not call me out if I should chance to make any of my usual blunders."

The Earl paused, and Montague was more than ever at a loss what to make of him. The appearance of a servant, who informed them dinner was upon table, relieved him from making any answer, as the Earl exclaimed—

“Faith! I am glad to hear it, for we all want something to cheer our spirits. I am not, you perceive, a fashionable man, Mr. O’Brien,” taking his arm, and leading the way into an adjoining parlour, where they sat down to a very elegant repast; and after making tolerably free with the bottles, returned into the saloon to coffee. The servants being soon dismissed, the Peer thus began:—

“Now will you, my dear young friend, just tell me all you know about yourself. I am conscious I am asking you a very great favour, and I cannot give you my absolute reasons for being so damned inquisitive, because I don’t wish to raise hopes I may
never

never be able to realize; only you see if I could prove you were no more a bastard than myself, honey, why I ought to do my best endeavours to serve you."

"Your Lordship has indeed surprised me," said the now anxious Montague.

"I perceive I have, my jewel, for your face would not have suited a rogue at all, do you see; it is too great a tell-tale, as I told you last night. My good friend here is in all my secrets, and almost as much interested in clearing up this matter to our satisfaction, as you or I can be; for in the first place he is my brother-in-law, and in the next, your uncle Lord Irnham's very particular friend, whom he swears you resemble much more than your not very honourable father: but let that pass for the present; if Lord Altamont told me truth, (and he could gain nothing by telling a lie, or, faith! I should not have credited his tale), why I have no fear of succeeding to the utmost extent of my wishes in clearing up the mystery which at present hangs over your birth. So

now I have given you a few hints why I am so curiously inclined, pray tell me all you can remember about yourself since you were no higher than this coffee cup."

"My mother was certainly distantly related to his Lordship," thought Montague, readily complying with the Peer's request, though without permitting himself to make a single reflection upon his father's former want of generosity and feeling; and thus concluded—

"Your Lordship's acknowledged doubts respecting the illegitimacy of my birth, have (certain I was addressing men of honour) induced me to be thus communicative. Indeed I know my father has related my very simple story to several of his friends; and now as you say you cannot at present be as explicit as you could wish, let us drop the subject; I freely put my cause into your hands, certain you will see justice done me."

"I will,

“ I will, I will, my brave boy ; there is not one thing puzzles me in your late narrative ; both you and I have been told your mother died in bringing you into the world, and yet you have a faint recollection of such a person, and of having been in a ship ? ”

“ A mere confused idea, as I told your Lordship, which I now account for by presuming I had a tedious passage to France, perhaps from London to Boulogne ; and that the person I thought my mother, was my nurse. I never asked my father to explain this circumstance ; if you think yourself entitled to put the question to him, I can have no objection, nor to repeating in his presence, should it be necessary, every syllable I have told you.”

“ Let what will be the result of my appeal to the Right Honourable Charles Egerton’s honour, my dear boy, I shall not make you a party in our dispute :—your duty demands one line of conduct, and mine another ; but, as you very properly said just now, no more of the subject for the present.

Our joint friend, Colonel O'Hallaran, will accompany me to London, and as soon as we return, you shall see or hear from us; and, not to keep either you or myself long in suspense, I mean to return with you to Southampton to-morrow, as I shall think every second an age till I am upon the road, though I know travelling fast will not suit my crazy constitution;—well, I can only repeat, pray God I may live to elucidate this affair entirely to your satisfaction, and then no matter how soon I am called away!”

“Come, come,” said Colonel O'Hallaran, “we shall drink many a bottle together yet; you have mended daily since you have been in the island, and when once your mind is perfectly at ease, you will forget all your past sorrows, and look forward to many pleasant days: I will ensure you a perfect and a speedy cure. Why, man, you brought your disorder on by fretting; therefore I know your troubles being brought to a conclusion, will greatly accelerate your recovery;

recovery : and I have no doubt the Counsellor will think it most prudent to accede to our joint wishes, else I will venture to prognosticate Lord Ingham will disclaim his relationship, and readily join our party, should he force us to have recourse to the law."

"I only hope, Gentlemen," said Montague, "much as I feel flattered by the interest you both take in my welfare, you will proceed on sure grounds. I presume you were acquainted, and perhaps in a distant degree related to my mother; still merely to assert claims it may be very difficult, if not impossible, either to verify or support, will only hurt my father's reputation, render me an object of general curiosity, and yet not clear my mother's fame."

"Your observations are very just, my dear young friend," replied the Peer, "but I trust we shall reinstate you in your just rights, and clear your mother's conduct to the world : as for your father, he must abide by the consequence of his own duplicity."

city. But of this you may rest assured, we will proceed with the utmost caution and prudence, and like men of honour; in short, exactly as I can conceive your worthy uncle, Lord Irnham, and yourself would proceed in our places, and actuated by similar motives. But let us drop the subject, since we cannot yet properly enlarge upon it; and as we none of us got much rest last night, we will retire early, and endeavour, by banishing all unpleasing reflection upon the past, present, and future, to court the company of the drowsy God, who certainly oftener visits cottages than palaces, and no doubt for excellent reasons, for it is a guilty conscience generally prevents his approach. But I won't tire you with any more of my profling."

A summons to supper effectually broke in upon his Lordship's discourse, and in a short time they retired to their respective apartments.

Montague

Montague was not sorry when he found himself alone. Hitherto he had never had the slightest reason to entertain any doubts respecting the illegitimacy of his birth; and he was still rather at a loss to divine why Lord Fitzarran was so anxious to have this point cleared. Counsellor Egerton was undoubtedly his father; and if his claims to legitimacy rested solely upon his acknowledging them, he had little reason to hope they would ever be admitted: and no doubt if he had, from any sinister motive, wished to affix a stigma upon his birth, he had taken every necessary precaution to ensure the success of his scheme, and Lord Fitzarran would therefore probably find he was too well versed in the law of his country, to be very easily forced to speak the truth, especially when it militated against his own interest; and should the matter be brought into a Court of Justice, there was very little reason to expect they would meet with more success. The Counsellor was undoubtedly aware of the possibility of such an event,

(if the Earl and Colonel had any proofs to adduce in support of what they seemed inclined to advance), and of course prepared to defend his conduct, should it be publicly scrutinized; for was it likely he would suffer himself to be baffled in a point which so materially concerned his reputation? And should he (O'Brien) be a gainer, admitting the proposed investigation answered the proposed end? Surely not, since the legitimacy of his birth could only be proved at the expence of his father's honour; and admitting the Counsellor had never, till very lately, evinced any great degree of paternal affection towards him, still, if he was only his natural son, the law would not have compelled him to have given him such an education, nor to have placed him in a profession, where there was a chance of his rising by his merit. He had frequently, when tempted to repine at his father's neglect, condemned himself for being not less deficient in natural affection, which he could only attribute to his having been brought

up as an alien, and uniformly treated with a degree of reserve, very unlikely to inspire him even with that love which is the offspring of duty; yet he wished, in the present instance, so to frame his conduct, as were he a father, his soul would wish to meet with from a son.

His mother had undoubtedly paid the debt of nature. Her premature death had, perhaps, induced his father to affix such a stigma upon her memory; but then, how supine in her relations and friends not to have sooner endeavoured to vindicate her fame! Surely this ought to have been done previous to the Counsellor's second marriage;—at present he wanted nothing that gentleman had to bestow, and as for the Altamont title, and slender estate thereunto annexed, he felt no wish to ensure them to his children at the expence of his father's reputation. Yet this was a matter he must suffer to take its course; for, himself out of the question, it was the duty of his mother's friends

friends to see justice done her memory ; nor could the most indulgent friend find an excuse for the Counsellor's conduct, if, as Lord Fitzarran more than hinted, he had brought up his eldest son and heir as an illegitimate offspring, degrading at once both mother and child.

In vain did Montague endeavour to forget himself while these reflections haunted his mind. Fatigue, at last, quieted his perturbed spirits ; but the same perplexing ideas occurred to him the moment he awoke.

There was but two years' difference between him and his elder brother : his father therefore, it was clear, did not long grieve for his mother ; they had most probably been privately married, if there were any absolute foundation for what the Earl asserted, who, he was convinced, must have been related to his mother ; and he thought he now, admitting his two first suppositions
to

to be true, could easily divine why his father had brought him up as a natural child. His present wife would most likely not have given him her hand, had she known there was any heir, besides Lord Irnham, between any children she might have, and the Altamont title and estate. Well, possibly a short time might suffice to elucidate this mystery; at all events he must wait with patience the result of Lord Fitzarran's negotiations, resolving not to make his wife acquainted with what was in agitation till his legitimacy was confirmed.

He found the Earl and Colonel in the breakfast parlour, ready equipped for their intended journey. His Lordship enquired how Montague had slept, and then conversed upon indifferent subjects till they were informed the boat which the Earl had engaged to convey them to Southampton, was ready. They immediately went on board, and after an early dinner at Montague's quarters, set off in a hack chaise and four
for

for Winchester, where they intended to sleep, observing, they should be in town, without any fatigue, long before the fashionable dinner hour the next day. Montague would fain have persuaded them to make use of his carriage; but his Lordship gaily negatived the offer, observing they did not wish to excite notice, nor could he bear the thought of shoving his yellow meagre phiz into so fashionable a vehicle.

As soon as they were gone, Henry, who had not been at High Clere, and several of the Officers, entered O'Brien's apartment; and as the day was remarkably fine, proposed a walk. Their late excursion, the belles of Newport, &c. afforded them ample subject for conversation, till chance, or rather design, on the part of some of the Officers, brought them into the back lane that skirted the apothecary's garden. Some bricklayers being at work repairing the breach Montague had made, his companions enquired whether they were in his, or Bark's employ;

employ. He protested the apothecary ought to think himself very fortunate that he did not prosecute him for detaining his dog.

“ Oh, you certainly deserve his thanks for your lenity,” said one of the party ; “ he is however determined no one shall in future scale his wall, to save themselves the trouble of returning through his house ; for he has given orders to have it considerably elevated, to prevent any more skipping bucks (his own phrase) from displaying their agility at his expence ; and when the cat, who occasioned his late misfortune, dies, he swears he will never have another—nay, I should not wonder if he was to give the poor animal a fly dose, by way of wreaking his vengeance upon something, or somebody.”

“ To complete the whole,” said Henry, “ I would advise him to place men-traps and spring guns upon his premises, and then he might rest in security.”

“ Or

“ Or to give his wife a dose instead of her cat,” said O’Brien, “ else, in spite of his elevated wall, he will never find himself comfortable when from home.”

The various effects of jealousy upon the mind were now amply discussed by the whole party; and they all agreed an obstinate fool generally laid the foundation of his own misery.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

THE following morning Montague received a letter from his wife, which informed him she had got rid of her visitors, and meant to set out for Southampton the beginning of the next week, requesting he would engage either lodgings or a house for her reception; and if he could contrive to make it convenient, give her the meeting upon the road. He answered her epistle by return of post, expressing his real satisfaction at the prospect of so soon seeing her, and promising to provide her a home against her arrival; saying he hoped he should be perfectly

perfectly at leisure to shew her all the lions of Southampton ; and when she was tired of the place, they could either proceed to London together, or return for a short time into Wiltshire, as best suited her inclination : meanwhile, if she would be so obliging as to let him know what day she meant to leave Lenham, he would give her the meeting at Salisbury, and bring her forwards in his curricule, having vanity enough to believe himself a very tolerable whip, considering the little practice he had had.

As soon as he had dispatched this letter, he began to look about for a house, likely both to suit and please his wife ; and as money was not an object, he engaged a beautiful villa near the entrance of the town, for a month certain ; the gardener and three female servants were, if it may be so termed, let with the mansion, which belonged to a family of some distinction, who were going to London by way of varying the scene ; and who, being rather tinctured with
Lord

Lord Altamont's prevalent failing, let their house to assist in defraying the expence of their journey. As her Ladyship was to bring several male domestics with her, in addition to those already at Southampton, Montague had very little trouble in arranging his household, and almost immediately removed, with Henry, to his new habitation, wishing to be perfectly settled, and have every thing in order against her Ladyship's arrival.

After exercising the men, the morning after his removal, accompanied by Henry, he sauntered towards his old quarters with the body of Officers. They had but just reached the Dolphin, when a post-chaise drew up to the pavement, and the waiter, letting down the step, enquired whether the company it contained chose to alight—

“No,” cried a female, in a very haughty tone; “desire your master to let me have
a pair

a pair of his best horses, to take me on to Winchester."

The door of the carriage was closed, and the speaker let down the front glass. Henry instantly exclaimed—

"I am sure I know that face."

"Which of them?" asked a young Officer, "for there are two females in the chaise, and neither of them are Mrs. Bark."

"That is a d—d fine woman who sits on this side," cried another.

"Old enough to be your grandmother," said a third.

"She is not thirty," retorted the second.

"Much nearer sixty," replied the other, loud enough for the lady in question to profit by his flattering remarks, who now called out—

"Captain O'Brien, I hope I see you well this morning?"

Montague

Montague was obliged to advance; but either from not being so quick-sighted as Henry, or from not having an equal good memory, he had made his bow before he recognized the Mrs. Merton who had been so severely cut up by her old servant, as they were returning from their religious expedition at High Clere.

Henry smiled when he perceived his friend recollected the antiquated belle, and was not surprised to find himself overlooked, Martha having informed him by what standard this lady chose her male acquaintance. Montague could do no less than enquire after Mrs. Balfour, &c.; then hoped she had not left High Clere for any length of time, as he meant to ride over there in the course of a few days.

“ Bless me, what have not you been there, Captain, since I last had the pleasure of seeing you ? ”

“ Can

“ Can you suppose, Madam, I should have been so much my own enemy, as not to have endeavoured to pay my respects to Mrs. Merton, who condescends to honour me with a title I as yet have no pretensions to, being only a Lieutenant?”

“ I don’t wonder so pious a young man should be so very modest,” replied the ancient dame, rather piqued at the sarcastic expression of Montague’s countenance.

While this was passing, Henry was, in a whisper, informing the Officers who this would-be *Ninon de L’Enclos* was. The mirth she had so recently occasioned them, was renewed, though not quite openly; still the good lady found it impossible to doubt what occasioned their repeated bursts of laughter: therefore, by way of imposing silence upon the insolent wretches, she told O’Brien she was going upon a visit to one of her nearest relations, Lady Sleaford. The information was of no avail; the Officers continued

continued to stare and smile, and her horses were not brought out.

Determined to revenge herself upon somebody, she called out, "I am told, Lieutenant, you were remarkably edified by Mr. Cantwell's sermon."

"I was much more edified during my walk back to Mrs. Balfour's," replied the smiling Montague.

The lady he addressed could not bluster for obvious reasons;—slightly and scornfully bowing her head, she was in the act of drawing up the glass, when Henry, presenting himself, hoped his aunt and cousins were well, and that she had punished the old drunken smuggler that had annoyed her so much when he had lost the pleasure of seeing her.

Enraged almost beyond endurance, she said, "There was little difference between the higher or the lower order of Methodists;

they were all hypocrites, generally drunkards, though the better sort dignified their liquors with medicinal names; and all addicted to slander those neighbours they could not convert."

Her horses being now put to her chaise, she ordered the postboy, in a peremptory tone, to make the best of his way to Winchester. The lad, however, paid very little regard to her injunctions, as he mounted very leisurely, and scarcely put his horses into a jog trot when he did set off, by which means she heard the various bets the Officers were offering Henry and O'Brien, "that the smuggler had driven her away, never to return;—the quantity of baggage upon, and within the chaise, the young men agreed, warranted the supposition."

The horses of all those who kept such appendages to greatness, were immediately ordered out, and in less than ten minutes O'Brien, Henry, and several other Officers, were

were upon the road to High Clere, to try to discover whether the discreet matron they had just parted from, had actually been obliged to remove her quarters.

A very short time brought them to the entrance of the village, and in sight of the white house, when, who should they meet but the very identical Martha, to whom they attributed Mrs. Merton's forced retreat. They would not have noticed her, if she had not called out, curtsying to Montague, "God bless that handsome face!"

Instantly recognizing her voice, he checked his horse, saying, "How are you, Martha? How is Madam Merton?"

"Why, did not you meet her, your Honour?" with a look that denoted triumph; "I told you I would be a match for her—she is off, she is off! I made the place too hot for her withered carcase;—you know I said I would, and Martha was never worse than her word."

By this time she was surrounded by the horsemen, who having bets depending, were all anxious to know if she was gone never to return.

“Truly is she,” cried Martha; “she popped off quite flily, bag and baggage, while all the folks here were in the midst of the bustle this morning;—I suppose you, gentlemen, be all comed to the wedding.”

“No, indeed,” replied Montague; “we did not even know there had been any such great doings in your village.”

“Why, the Lord have mercy upon me! your Honour quite surprises me! Not heard of our grand wedding? Why ban’t you Madam Balfour’s kinsmen?”

“To be sure we are, Martha,” cried Henry, “so pray tell us all about this wedding?”

“Well, I did not think as she would have gone to have kept the matter a secret from you neither; but mayhap she thought the bridegroom might have been jealous of
such

such handsome young gentlemen, for God knows, he is none so tempting, and his bride might have repented, you know, before the day was over; for though he can sing psalms with the best on 'em, and lift up his eyes like a duck in thunder, as a body may say, when he is at meeting, he can be charming and crusty sometimes when he sees fit, and will make her heart ache, or I am mistaken. He was a fine young tyrant when I had him at nurse, and what is bred in the blood is never out of the flesh; and God knows, he has been a sad dog since he grew up:—but, as Madam Balfour says, and she knows what's what if any body does he is grown a new man; but she is a dear good soul, and may be taken in, for there, Mrs. Merton made her, I verily think, believe she was akin to the Queen, and that she was one of the greatest ladies in all England;—if she had said greatest something else, you take me, she would have been nearer the mark: however, nobody chose to see her after I had let out upon her

calling me a drunkard ; so she was forced to pack up, and trudge, and I warrant me she will keep out of my reach in future. She used now and then to give me a shilling or so, to be sure ; but my dear Madam Balfour says I sha'nt be any loser—she will stand my friend, and make a gathering for me, because I have brought the truth to light ; for to be sure, as Mr. Cantwell tells us, one scabby sheep spoils a whole flock ; and she was a dangerous body to have in this here godly village.”

“ But what wedding were you talking about, Martha ? ” asked O'Brien.

“ Why, Sir, 'tis Miss Cantwell's, our good preacher's daughter ; Madam is mortal fond of her since she has brought her into the right road. Good dear creature, she only thinks of saving us poor sinners ; and I will say it, though the devil was to stand in the gap, poor Nancy deserved a better husband, for a better natured girl never broke bread. She had a slip, to be sure, when she was eighteen, and that was
very

very excusable, because she was young and tender-hearted, and you wild young rogues knows how to coax us poor easy souls to our undoing: not that I mean to affront you, gentlemen—God in heaven forbid! But you will be in nice time to eat bride-cake, and the like of that, at the white house. Madam Balfour gives the wedding dinner; her heart is quite open, I can assure you; she just now gave me a full bumper of her excellent cough cordial, to drink the bride and bridegroom's health. God bless them both! said I, for I owe neither of them any ill will; only as I said before, Jemmy Dip, the Tallow Chandler is a pure four crab, but Nancy is a pretty girl, and a good girl; and as for what passed nine years ago, why it ought to be forgot, and I ban't sure whether James is as wise as his neighbours in that respect; I am sure he shall never know a syllable of the matter from me, for to let you know, gentlemen, I scorn to prate except I am provoked."

“ You have given us proofs of your discretion,” observed Montague, putting a half-crown piece into her hand, “ and we are much obliged to you for your information.”

“ God in Heaven bless your Honour !” she cried, as they rode on, highly diverted by what they had heard.

Some of the party were for returning, but Henry over-ruled their scruples ; he must call upon his aunt, who would have infinite reason to be offended if she heard he had been at High Clere without looking in upon her, and they should all accompany him to see this crabbed bridegroom and pretty bride. Riding forwards to announce them, Montague was pointing out the room where he had before caught the first glance of the family they were going to visit, when he perceived the wedding party, as he presumed, all upon their knees, in the very act of singing hymns.

“ 'Tis

" 'Tis almost a pity to break in upon their devotion," he cried; but Henry instantly rang a smart peal upon the bell, enjoying by anticipation the bustle their arrival would occasion.

The younger Miss Balfour, not being very attentive to her singing, was the first to give the alarm, by declaring there were twenty soldiers on horseback at the door. Panic-struck, the whole party started upon their feet, and Mrs. Balfour flew to the door. The sight of her nephew relieved her from the apprehension she began to entertain, but was not, in other respects, particularly welcome; still he was become a man of such consequence, she affected to be very happy to see him, and requested his companions would alight, adding, with a forced smile—"I have a wedding party within, and we were just singing the bridal hymn when you rung, nephew. Do pray step into my cottage, gentlemen. Mr. O'Brien, pray set your friends the example—

you are no stranger. I can give you a slice of bride-cake, though it will not be so great a treat to you as to my nephew. I hope Lady Albury was well when you heard from her?"

Montague replied in the affirmative, telling her he expected his wife would very shortly be at Southampton, when he hoped they should have the pleasure of seeing Mrs. and the Miss Balfours.

The old fanatic had never been more flattered, and the Misses capered with joy. Having wrote his wife an account of his first visit to High Clere, she had requested he would keep up the acquaintance, as she absolutely longed to see the party he had so humorously described; and this had induced him to invite the good lady to visit his villa. While he was thus gratifying her pride, Henry was making signs to the Officers to alight, which they very readily did, and were all introduced to the bride

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and

and bridegroom. The singing was put a total stop to, and the wine and cake were once more brought out, and handed round. The lady of the house, who looked unusually rosy, and who foresaw great advantages might arise from cultivating the acquaintance of Lady Albury, soon grew exceedingly gay, pressed the whole party to make free—nay, even asked them to stay dinner. This they very politely declined, and after spending an hour, much more gaily than they had expected, set out on their return, very well satisfied with the specimen they had received of Mrs. Balfour's hospitality.

The Officers parted with Montague and Henry at the gates of the former's villa, where, to the infinite surprise of the latter, he found his father, who, having some business to do with a brother merchant, settled in that neighbourhood, had readily seized so favourable an opportunity of getting introduced to his son's new friend. Though he had sickened at the bare idea of being

c 6 related

related to a lawyer's bastard, (his own phrase in his letter of recal to his son), he yet could court the acquaintance of Lady Albury's husband; but a wish to see Henry, and to look in upon Mrs. Balfour, in addition to the business he came upon, were his ostensible reasons for having thus unexpectedly arrived at Southampton. He had learned at the Dolphin where he should find his son, and had ventured, though unacquainted with Mr. O'Brien, to call upon him at that gentleman's, in preference to sending for him to the inn.

Montague, who could very easily forgive his not wishing to have him for a brother-in-law, and who thought, if he bore any resemblance to Henry, he must be a valuable member of society, gave him a very kind reception, and insisted upon his becoming his guest during his stay in the neighbourhood, as he was resolved not to part with his young friend, and yet did not wish to deprive his father of his society. The

merchant, declaring it next to impossible to withstand so kind an invitation, made little difficulty in acceding to his wishes, as his stay must, of necessity, be very short; and though he certainly came into Hampshire greatly upon his sister-in-law's account, he had resolved never again to take up his abode under her roof, having once for three days been her inmate, and when she was not singing hymns, they were always quarrelling about religion:—he had therefore made a vow never to sleep in her house a second time; yet as he had long had the management of her temporal affairs, he was often obliged to write to her, and sometimes, as now, to visit her: indeed he thought her more to be pitied than blamed, though a more wrong-headed, silly, fanatical enthusiast he believed never existed.

Henry said he was quite of his opinion, recapitulating what had passed during his first and second visit to High Clere; and this narrative, added to Montague's ludicrous remarks,

remarks, amused the old man so much, that his sable dress, and recent loss of his only sister, did not prevent his laughing till the tears ran down his cheeks, and his sides grew absolutely painful; and when able to speak, protested he foresaw he should be obliged to engage apartments in a private madhouse for her ere she was many years older; nay, he hardly knew whether, for her children's sake, he should not be justified in placing her in immediate confinement: for though she half starved, in the most literal sense of the word, her daughters and servant, neither allowing them fire, candle, victuals, or clothes, she squandered away more money upon Methodist preachers and their followers, than would enable her and her children to live in the most respectable style: therefore, to what could any reasonable people attribute such an excess of spiritual quixotism, but to idiomism or downright madness?

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

LADY ALBURY having informed her husband of the day she meant to leave Lenham, and that she should sleep at Salisbury, thither, at the appointed time, he drove his curricle, anxious to seize the first opportunity, in her Ladyship's presence, to display his newly-acquired skill. The Antelope he knew was the house where she meant to take up her quarters for the night, and there he found he had even preceded her *avant-courier*; he therefore gave every necessary order for her reception, and soon had the satisfaction of seeing her carriage drive into the court. Their joy was mutual, and their

their meeting such as might be expected between two people so sincerely attached to each other, and who neither had, nor ever seemed likely to have, any drawbacks to their felicity. Once or twice during the course of the evening, Montague was half tempted to mention Lord Fitzarran, but checked himself upon reflecting that a very short time would probably bring those claims, his Lordship was gone to enforce, to an issue; and she could not be hurt, should the illegitimacy of his birth be confirmed, if she never knew any contrary hopes had been entertained. He then turned the conversation upon Mrs. Balfour, and told her the Melcombes were still his guests. She had heard both father and son very highly spoken of in their neighbourhood, and was therefore glad to hear they were his intimates, as Henry in particular had made himself many friends during his late very short residence at Woodley; and as she thought his, and O'Brien's, were congenial minds, she was therefore convinced she should like him;

him; but particularly enjoyed the thoughts of being introduced to Mrs. Balfour.

Not wishing to reach Southampton much before their dinner hour, which repast they seldom took before six, they did not leave Salisbury very early; and as the *bits of blood* were in excellent spirits, they got on rather faster than they had expected, it not having struck five when they dashed into the court of the elegant villa, which Montague hoped would meet her Ladyship's approbation. She readily declared it far exceeded any expectations she had formed respecting the accommodations she should meet with, and protested it commanded a finer view than her favourite cottage could boast of having from any of its windows; though, in other respects, it was certainly not to be compared to that superb habitation.

Being presented to the Mr. Melcombes, she gave them infinite reason to praise her affability, assuring them she considered them

as her country neighbours, and old friends, and rejoiced to think how sociable they should be when they returned into Wiltshire.

An elegant dinner had been ordered, and several of the superior Officers, with whom she was already acquainted, in compliance with Montague's invitation, soon made their appearance, to welcome her Ladyship to Southampton, who felt particularly flattered by these repeated proofs of her husband's desire to gratify every wish she could form, even before she could give them utterance.

An excellent dinner had greatly exhilarated the spirits of the whole party, and her Ladyship's presence and lively conversation not a little contributed to the general gaiety. She was rising to leave the room, when a bustle in the hall occasioned a momentary silence, and they heard somebody warmly exclaim—

“Blood-

Blood-and-'ouns, what would the fellow be after doing? I tell you my name is very well known to your master, so stand out of my way; I am glad to hear he has got company, so never fear my deranging him, or any body else, honey!"

"What can all this mean?" said her Ladyship, in evident astonishment.

"Surely it is the Earl of Fitzarran's voice," said Montague, starting up.

Before he could reach the door, it flew open, and the Irish Peer, whose inward satisfaction was visible in every feature of his face, hastily advanced, and before O'Brien was at all aware of his intention, caught him in his arms, and gave him a most cordial hug, saying—

"Ah my jewel of a boy, have I found you at last?—You have moved your quarters since we parted, or you would have seen me much sooner; but I have not returned alone, you perceive."

Lady

Lady Albury's astonishment was greatly increased by his Lordship's strange behaviour, though it was soon blended with joy upon perceiving her father standing in the background, just within the door. She was making towards him, when Lord Fitzarran, before any one else could speak, having released Montague from his embrace, called out—

“ Now is not this fine creature your wife, my dear boy ? if so, pray introduce me. I dare say she thinks me mad ; but when she learns the cause of my transports, I know her fine eyes will sparkle still more than they do at present.”

A compliment, however uncouth, is seldom grating to the female ear ; her Ladyship therefore readily suffered the frank Irishman to raise her white hand to his lips, while she extended the other to Lord St. Osyth, still very much at a loss to comprehend either Lord Fitzarran's meaning or allusions, who
now

now called out, "By Jafus, I am afraid I have deranged a very jovial party, and am now keeping all this good company standing; so, my dear O'Brien, pray introduce me and my companions to those of your party not already acquainted with us, and then let me request you would place one of these gentlemen in your chair, while your two fathers (for the Right Honourable Charles Egerton is somewhere behind me) clear up a trifling mistake respecting yourself, in another room. Delays are dangerous in matters of business, or, faith! I would not take you from your company, jewel; but should Captain Death, who has frequently stared me in the face, call for any of my party this evening, some of them would not be very well prepared to meet his summons: besides, in case it should be my own turn, I wish to unburthen my conscience, and settle all my worldly affairs before proper witnesses: and, faith! I should not mind confessing my sins before five hundred people, if that was all. But some folks are more
ashamed

ashamed to acknowledge, than to commit a dirty action: so do you see, gentlemen, I shall take this young rogue and his handsome wife into custody for an hour or so, promising to return them to you in even better spirits than we found them."

The Officers made a motion to depart, but this was so strenuously over-ruled by O'Brien, that they resumed their seats, after having been introduced to Lord St. Osyth and Counsellor Egerton; Henry, at the request of the founder of the feast, taking his place at the bottom of the table. The family party were preparing to leave the room, when Lord Fitzarran called out—

"Faith! I must give these gentlemen one bumper toast before I retire; Lord St. Osyth and O'Hallaran, I am sure you will both do honour to it. "Here is health and long life to our two prisoners!" pouring himself a full glass of claret.

Every

Every one present, O'Brien and his wife excepted, followed his example, and none gave more emphasis to their words than Counsellor Egerton. The last comers, attended by the master and mistress of the house, now adjourned into the library. Lady Albury hardly knew what to expect; something of an agreeable nature, if she put any faith in what Lord Fitzarran had said. Still Montague was evidently very much agitated; and Counsellor Egerton, whose colour varied every moment, seemed unable to meet the eyes of any one present; but Lord St. Olyth appeared calm and collected; joy illuminated every feature of the Earl; and Colonel O'Hallaran's countenance denoted internal satisfaction, strongly tinged with contempt, when he cast his eyes towards Egerton, who was twisting his hat, which he held in his hand, into twenty different forms, every succeeding minute, hardly sensible of what he was about, or where he was. As soon as they were seated,

Lord

Lord Fitzarran, looking full in her Ladyship's face, thus began—

“ I find this young rogue has not told you how I offended and perplexed him not long since at Newport, nor that he expected to see me again ; so I will endeavour to explain why I broke in upon you so abruptly. I knew, if my joy had not quite got the better of my prudence, I should have sent for you both out, and proceeded calmly and deliberately to business ; but, faith ! I never could make any of my passions subservient to that same cold virtue, so often misnamed prudence ; so you must e'en take me as I am, and balance the honesty of my principles against the courtesy of that Right Honourable supporter of the laws of his country ! ” fixing his eyes upon the confused Counsellor ; who, though few men at the bar could brow-beat a witness, or disconcert a junior member of the long robe with more success, now shrunk from the Earl's angry glances, while the glow either of anger, mortified

mortified pride, or perhaps shame tinged his cheeks with the deepest crimson.

His Lordship, after a short pause, proceeded:—"Had I attended to the representations of this honourable gentleman, I should have allowed him, as being certainly most competent to the task, to open the cause, which he promised to do with infinite candour; but I told him, being plaintiff, I did not chuse to wave my right to speak first, freely granting him leave to defend himself, if able, when I have told my tale."

Montague was now convinced that his father had been forced to acknowledge he had been married to his mother. Conscious guilt was certainly portrayed in the Counsellor's countenance; still his son felt for his situation, and sincerely wished the Irish Peer had been less friendly officious, and was very anxious to discover what had impelled him to stand forth the champion of

his mother's honour. His Lordship did not keep him long in suspense ; having consulted the looks of Lord St. Osyth, he thus continued.

“ So now to come to the point at once, and set your heart quite at ease, my jewel, I must inform you that your father is now blushing for his past conduct towards you. Lord St. Osyth, who has certainly reason on his side, and my brother here, prevented me from publicly exposing him ; as they very properly observed, so long as you were but reinstated in those rights he vainly endeavoured to deprive you of, the less his turpitude was blazoned to the world, the better for those who have the misfortune to be related to a person of his principles. Therefore, in compliance with their wishes, I called you from your company before I told you my sentiments of your father ; besides, I by no means wished to wound your feelings, though you are no grandson of mine, if you would not boldly stand forth in defence of your injured mother's

mother's honour, even though your father was her traducer. It is your duty, as well as mine, to rescue her name from undeserved obloquy, for a more charming creature never left dear little Ireland; yet that honourable gentleman was ashamed to acknowledge she was his wife, and brought up her son as the fruit of a private amour: so now pray, Counsellor, retract your base assertions in the presence of this honourable company, acknowledge Montague O'Brien Egerton to be your first-born legitimate son and heir, by my only daughter, Frances O'Brien."

Mr. Egerton hemmed three times to clear his voice, while Lady Albury gloried in his confusion; and her sparkling eyes, as Lord Fitzarran had foreseen, evinced the joy she felt at this, to her, very unexpected and very pleasing discovery.

Montague, no longer angry with his respectable grandfather, felt half consoled for the disgrace which awaited his father, and

perfectly convinced he ought, even at the risk of his life, to vindicate his mother's fame.

The Counsellor, after a pause of no inconsiderable length, was able to articulate, "I have long had it in contemplation, my dear Montague, to make the very acknowledgment Lord Fitzarran has just dictated to me; I therefore readily inform you that you are my first-born legitimate son, and of course my heir. Your mother was his Lordship's only daughter; yet notwithstanding the just reason I have given you to arraign my conduct, I trust, when you have heard why I suffered you to believe you were only my natural son, you——"

"The devil take him and his reasons, my dear grandson!" cried the Peer, starting up, and interrupting the excellent orator. "Come once more to the arms of your delighted grandfather, who glories in his own Irish boy."

The

The tears he had hitherto with difficulty restrained, choked the Peer's utterance for a few seconds, while he enfolded this newly discovered grandson in his feeble arms.

Montague was little less affected, and could not help rejoicing he was so nearly related to this honest, frank Milesian, though he was sensible the recent discovery must lower his father in the esteem of every honest man who was, or might hereafter become, acquainted with his duplicity. Every one present (perhaps we might except the Counsellor) sincerely participated in the feelings of the Earl and Montague. When the former could release the new object of his dearest solicitude from his paternal embrace, he approached Lady Albury, who rose to meet him.

"Now did not I tell you, brilliant as your eyes were when I entered, I should increase their lustre? I knew you would rejoice to hear your husband is no more a

bastard than the son and heir will be, which I hope you mean soon to present him with ; and, faith ! next to my glorious boy, you enjoy the greatest share of my affection, just for noticing him so kindly under all his late disadvantages:—to be sure, you must have been blind not to have loved him, for I don't think the three kingdoms can produce his fellow, in point of face and figure. However, he now (with much more justice) tacks the word *honourable* to his name, as well as his father ; and will soon be a Peer—aye, before my death ; so give me one kiss, for being the herald of such joyful tidings."

Lady Albury never felt herself more at a loss for words, between the visible chagrin of her father-in-law, and the exultation of the Earl ; but what she did say, was so expressive of the very tender regard she felt for her husband, that she rose very much in his Lordship's esteem, who, making her resume her chair, told her it should be the study

study of his future life to make his grandson and her amends for his past neglect.—“It will be but proper to inform you,” he proceeded, “how we came to be thus nearly related. If I was as good an orator as the honourable gentleman I have put to the blush, I dare say I should be able to tell my story much better, and to gloss over my own errors so smoothly, that I should excite the compassion, instead of the indignation of my hearers.”

“Suffer me, my Lord,” obtruded the Counsellor, “to relate the few facts necessary to convince my son.”

“Hold, learned Sir; as I told you upon the road, every one in his turn,” interrupted his Lordship. “The plaintiff, as I said before, is always heard before the defendant; the less competent I am to tell my story, the more you can enlarge upon my blunders. So to open my brief. My family name, I need not tell this good company, was O’Brien; and a more ancient or honourable one is not to be met with in all

Ireland. My father was a descendant from one of the poorest branches of this illustrious family, which is finely represented, you must agree, by such a scarecrow as the old man now speaking. The Army or the Navy are the only resources for the sons of poor gentlemen. An Irish lad is never deficient in point of spirit, so I was placed in the former to make my fortune, or find a grave. The last was much easier to do than the first; however, I did neither;—still I was happier, notwithstanding I was generally penniless, than I am now I have thousands at my command, and too crazy a constitution to enjoy any thing: but I ought to be called to order, I find. Why don't you remind me, Lord St. Osyth, that I don't speak to the question?—At sixteen I was taken from what was misnamed a military academy, and entrusted with a pair of colours, which I made a vow never to resign but with my life, and so far I was right; but I was soon as wild a youth, and as great a rake as any in the whole corps. I am now doing
penance

penance for that, and all my other follies, for I am twenty years older in point of constitution, than many men of my age. To be sure, having spent more than half my life in a warm climate, has been greatly against me.—But what was I going to say? I followed my regiment to Jersey, and did not return to Ireland until I was three-and-twenty, and I was then thought to be the finest fellow in the whole corps; and vain enough I was of my figure. Hitherto I had laughed at love, and all that; I thought I should always be able to play round the flame without singeing my whiskers; but I found myself strangely mistaken, for before I had been six months in Cork, I lost my heart to the finest lass the sun ever shone upon, of an excellent family, the only sister of my worthy friend here, who was then quite a baby, but who, by the way, is your great uncle."

"And as proud of my nephew and heir, my Lord," said Colonel O'Hallaran, "as you

can be of your grandson ;—but don't let me interrupt your narrative."

" True, true, we shall have time enough to congratulate each other when I have finished my story.—Frances O'Hallaran was as poor as myself; yet I loved her so much, I e'en made her an offer of my hand. She foreseeing we must live upon love, would fain have persuaded me to have forgot her; but I swore I could not live without her, so we agreed to starve together. At the expiration of ten months, she brought me a daughter, who, in the end, cost her her life, for she fell into a sort of lingering way, which the doctor called a decline: however, she was so gentle and so kind, I spent all my leisure hours with her, and grew very fond of my little girl. Had my wife lived, I believe I should have made a very good husband; but we were first doomed to be separated by a war breaking out. I was ordered abroad, and was soon promoted to a Lieutenancy. At the siege of Quebec, I served under our immortal Wolfe; and to be

be sure, those unpolite Frenchmen gave me a taste of their bullets, but I scorned to die. However, it was reported in Ireland that I had followed our brave General's example, and my poor Fanny never recovered the shock, though I wrote to her as soon as I was able, and told her I hoped ere long to be recalled. Unhappily, these tidings did not effect her cure, though, by way of forwarding mine, she informed me, in answer, that she and my little Frances were in very good health; but I soon found out that she had deceived me, for her cousin, with whom she resided, wrote me word she had followed her to the grave about three weeks after the poor soul had dispatched that very letter: however, she promised to take the same care of my poor baby her mother had hitherto done. This was some consolation in the midst of my grief, for grieve I did very sincerely. Not to be too prolix, suffice it to say, in the course of the ensuing fifteen years, which I spent partly in North-America, and partly in our West-India
D 6 Islands,

Islands, now and then revisiting dear little Ireland, my girl grew as fine a lass as her mother had been before her. My cousin's demands upon me for her education, clothes, &c. seldom amounted to more than fifteen pounds a year; and I readily complied with them when I had the money, though I was sometimes in arrears, having fallen into my old rakish ways again soon after my wife's death.

“About this period the Americans took it into their heads, as the French have just done, to fancy they wanted more liberty than we were willing to grant them. The regiment to which I belonged, was ordered thither, to convince them of their folly. I had now got a company, and ought to have been a model of prudence; but I could not persuade myself to think for the future. My pay, which was nearly all I possessed, was but a slender pittance to divide between me and my girl. I often wished she had been a boy, because then I could

could have provided for her more advantageously : as it was, I trusted rather too much to future contingencies.

“ I had been about three years in America, assisting to quell the rebels, when I received a letter from my cousin, which informed me my girl had eloped with a young Englishman, as it was supposed; for they had hitherto, that is, she and her uncle, who had just sailed for India, been unable to discover where, or with whom she was gone. Situated as I was, and at such a distance, I could only write back to request she would discover her if possible, learn if she was married, endeavour to make her lover do her justice, if she was not; and to promise them my future friendship, and every farthing I could spare, for their future support. For upwards of a twelvemonth I remained in absolute ignorance of my daughter's fate, and was then informed she had died in childbirth, and was supposed to have been married to the person she had

gone off with, a lawyer's clerk ; but whether her child had survived her, or had shared her fate, they could not inform me. Provoked to think the girl had made such a strange choice (not knowing that this said clerk was the Right Honourable Charles Egerton), I am sorry to say, I endeavoured to forget I had ever been a father, or that it was possible I had still a grandson or daughter.

“ I was in this frame of mind, when I was appointed (by way of rewarding my past services) Lieutenant Governor of one of the Leeward Islands, whither I immediately removed, and where, at the expiration of five years, I was joined by my brother-in-law, who was just returned from the East-Indies, and like myself, not much richer than when he entered the service—like myself, he had also lost a beloved wife and an only daughter ; but as the child was in its infancy, I considered myself as still more unfortunate. The similarity in our fates,
and

and a still greater in our dispositions, added to our relationship, soon rendered us fast friends; and as my regret for my poor Fanny daily increased, from the moment I had it in my power to provide for her, I wrote over to my cousin, to request she would privately endeavour to inform herself whether her infant was living, whether it was a boy or a girl, and above all, whether it had a legal claim upon its father.

“ She took some time for reflection before she answered my letter, and then merely amused me with her own conjectures upon the subject, continuing to affirm that my daughter was dead, and that consequently she presumed the child was no more, or at all events, it could not be in want, else the father would certainly have applied to his wife’s family in its behalf, persisting in supposing my girl had been married to the fellow that had inveigled her from her friends. Both my brother and myself agreed there was reason in what she advanced:
besides,

besides, we neither of us knew to whom else to apply, at all likely to satisfy us respecting my daughter's marriage, or her child; but I resolved, the moment I returned to England, to find her husband out if he was above ground, and to take charge of the unfortunate infant, if it still existed.

“ Various circumstances, which would render my narrative too tedious to enumerate, forced me to prolong my residence in the West-Indies. In the first place, I did not like my predecessor in office to make a fortune, for faith! I found it very difficult to make both ends meet; therefore, having no money to send the cousin who had brought up my girl, she soon ceased corresponding with me, and I was forced, much against my will, to postpone making any further enquiries till I could do it in person; and I began to think I should never revisit my native country, when I received a letter from my worthy brother-in-law, whose regiment had been some time at Gibraltar, and

and was now ordered home, to request I would give him the meeting in England, as he had very lately, and very unexpectedly, by the death of a distant relation, a Spanish Merchant, (who had, in a fit of caprice, made him his heir), come into a large fortune, which he should want me to help him to spend. Having a good deal of business to settle in consequence of this event, he did not expect to leave Spain so soon as his regiment; but trusted, if I made immediate application for permission to return home, we should meet in London early in the ensuing autumn, and could then proceed together to Ireland, to make the long delayed enquiries respecting my poor girl; as he should ever consider her child, if living, as his heir.

“ Before I could answer this truly kind fraternal letter, I received another, which informed me (owing to the death of half a hundred first and second cousins, the two last of whom, more was the pity, had been murdered

murdered by the White Boys), I was become Earl of Fitzarran, and heir to two very large estates, one in England, the other in Ireland. Upon my soul, this letter gave me less satisfaction than I had received from the perusal of Colonel O'Hallaran's, for I was grown old and infirm, and had almost made up my mind to lay my bones in the West-Indies: however, the hope I entertained of being able to ascertain whether I had a grandchild living, (no matter by what father, for I had outlived my silly pride, which rather reconciled me to my new honours), I immediately answered the Colonel's letter, appointing to meet him as he wished, though I found I should make a considerable advance upon him, as I sailed for England within a week after I had dispatched my letter to Cadiz, where he then was, having business to settle with the late Earl's English steward, an attorney of great repute, whom I have retained in the same office.

“ I remained

“ I remained a short time in London, though more impatient than ever to discover who had deprived me of my daughter, and whether she had left any one besides her husband and myself to lament her loss. I soon received such undeniable proofs of the excellency of my agent's principles, that I was more than once tempted to consult him upon the business ; but then I thought that would be Irishman like, beginning at the wrong end, and so I resolved to proceed to Dublin : and though I much doubt whether any of my former acquaintance would have renewed their intimacy with Dennis O'Brien, faith ! the Earl of Fitzarran met with plenty of friends, and was in no want of relations, though, by my soul, some of them were scarcely fifth cousins.

“ My first care was to seek the good lady to whom I had confided my poor Fanny. She was gone to answer for her good or bad deeds in this world, I was informed ; but her heirs were so very complaisant to their
titled

titled relation, that they put me in possession of every scrap of paper they had found in her bureau upon her decease, among which I fished out the letter by which she learned my daughter's death; and a more concise, unsatisfactory epistle was never written by any of the Honourable Counsellor's brethren of the robe. Here it is, dated London, and thus it runs.—“Frances O'Brien departed this life on Monday, the 22d instant; a premature labour occasioned her death, and you are requested to make this known to all whom it may concern.”

“I will not enlarge upon the benedictions I bestowed upon my poor weak-brained cousin, for not having sent me this precious morsel, and for having persisted in affirming my poor girl was married, when, if there was any truth in this laconic epistle, she had died a spinster. A ray of hope, however, gleamed upon my mind; there was a possibility, I thought, that my child still lived. She might have caused this letter to have been
been

been written purposely to mislead her poor silly, meddling cousin. I will not tire you with repeating half the silly chimeras that came across my weak brain; for weak I literally was with a vengeance, having been under a physician's hands from the moment of my return, who had drenched me with fops, and crammed me with bolus's and pills, till he had brought me so low, I could hardly crawl about my bed-room; he therefore, being at a loss what to prescribe, advised me once more to cross the Channel, that I might try the efficacy of the Bristol waters. His advice happening to coincide with my own intentions, I wrote to my English steward, to give me the meeting at the Hot-Wells; and as the least fatiguing method of travelling, I went by sea almost to the door of my new habitation, where I found Compton (the attorney's name) waiting my arrival, and to him I briefly imparted what had befallen my daughter, the hopes I began to entertain she might still
be

be living, with every other foolish fancy that had lately suggested itself to me.

“He wondered and commented, and wondered again, till I nearly lost all patience, and told him I requested his advice, and not his remarks upon my narrative. He begged pardon.—“ Did I know the name of the person I presumed had induced my daughter to swerve from her duty?” I uttered a negative with such vehemence, that he was startled; and without asking any more questions, proposed my inserting an advertisement in all the town and country papers, offering a reward to whomever should be able to give any authentic intelligence respecting my daughter or her child, or who could ascertain the death of one, or both of them, as this might be done, he assured me, without giving any body reason to suppose the Earl of Fitzarran was at all interested in this appeal to the public; and he entertained great hopes that my daughter’s seducer, if living, would himself claim the promised gratification,

cation, and thus amply and every way satisfy my curiosity.

“ This was talking to the purpose, I told him; and that very evening he set out upon his return to London, to put this plan into execution. Whoever chose to claim the reward (which was five hundred pounds), was to wait upon him, and he was to give me immediate notice, should any thing transpire worth my attention.

“ The advertisement soon made its appearance, and I read it in every paper that fell in my way. It was to be inserted during a month, and more than three weeks had elapsed before any one appeared to claim the reward :—I had therefore given up all hopes, concluding the fellow had paid the debt of nature, as well as my daughter, and that they had left no family to inherit their poverty, when one morning, just as I was preparing to go down to the pump-room, Compton made his appearance, followed by as frightful an old woman as I would ever
with

wish to behold; and had I been the black gentleman himself, she could not have shook more than she did, when my agent told me he hoped she would be able to give me the latest information respecting Miss O'Brien.

‘So much the better,’ I cried; ‘but what the deuce ails the woman? Has she got an ague, or has she only been telling you a parcel of lies, Compton, in hopes of making her fortune?’

‘He hoped not; she had told him a very clean, and he believed, a very true story, which he now desired her to repeat to me, without giving her to understand I was related to the person mentioned in the advertisement.’

‘Aye, begin,’ said I, ‘and tell me all you know of Frances O'Brien; only remember, I will punish you with death, if possible, should you attempt to deceive me;’ desiring Compton to take down every word she said in writing, promising, by way of encouraging her

Compton to take down every word she said in writing, promising, by way of encouraging her to speak the truth, she should have the expected reward, if she could give me the information I desired.

“Here is what my secretary wrote down,” pulling out his pocket-book, and producing a folded paper; “I will read it with your leave, gentlemen;—you will remark, these are her exact words; to which Compton, by way of making the whole clear, has added my answers and objections.”

CHAP. V.

“MUST I tell, my Lord, where I was born, &c?”

“The devil burn me if I care whether you dropped from the moon, woman:—only tell me where, and how you got acquainted with Fanny O’Brien?”

“Why then, my Lord, I was just turned of two-and-forty when I went to live with Mrs. Cavanagh, my dear Miss Fanny’s cousin; and a hard place it was, God knows. I am sure I should not have staid a month, if it had not been for Miss, who was just turned of fifteen; and a sweeter young creature never breathed;—and there she
used

used to persuade me to stay, and to give me all the assistance in her power. Well, to make short of my story, my Lord, I had spent three years in the family, when a relation of my mistress's, a lawyer like, comed over from England, and brought a very smart young Englishman with him, his nephew, to write for him, and the like of that, though he was a greater man than his uncle, Counsellor O'Brien, for he was a Lord's son. And so this here young gentleman, what does he do but falls in love with my Miss Fanny, as I used to call her; and to say the truth, there was no love lost between them. There he used to write her such fine tender letters; for he was a great scholar, and Miss could do no less than answer them. Well, this went on for a matter of two months, when my young spark persuaded her to consent to a private marriage, and to accompany him to England;—and God knows, I did not see how she could better herself, as I told her, since he was so great a man;—and a husband must maintain

a wife, let the worst come to the worst ; and as for my part, I would follow her to the world's end, if she wished it. So she began to prepare every thing against she went off. I gave Madam warning by Mr. Egerton's (my new master's name) orders ; but instead of going back to Kilkenny, I remained concealed in Dublin, and with my assistance, my young Lady got all her clothes away privately, and joined me on the very morning they had agreed to be married. She had told her cousin that she was going out for the day ; but little did Madam Cavanagh think she would never return, for before night we were on our way to England, on board the very same packet that Counsellor O'Brien and Mr. Egerton had taken their passage in."

" Here," said the Earl, " interrupting her lecture, I put a stop to this very prolix narrative by vehemently demanding whether Miss O'Brien was married when she set sail for England ?

" My

“ My impatience startled the poor old wretch, who, fumbling in her pocket, produced a box, out of which she took a scrap of dirty paper, which was of more value in my eyes than a draft for a million upon the Bank of England: it was the certificate of my daughter's marriage to that honourable gentleman now present.—Here it is, and I made a vow when I received it, to clear my injured girl's fame, even at the expence of my life.”

In vain did his Lordship try to disperse the rising tear; unable to conceal his emotion, he hastily exclaimed, “ I believe I am growing childish in my old age. But to proceed with my story. Old and ugly as was this woman, I nevertheless caught her in my arms, and made her raise the house with her screams, fearful I was going to strangle her, and, considering my transports, not without great reason. When we were both rather recovered, I desired her to renew her tale; and I shall turn once more to my paper.

“ We reached England very safe. Mr. Egerton desired my Lady to stop one day at Milford, and then to come forward in the mail, he promising to meet us where that drove to in London, and to have a lodging ready for our reception; and there at the inn, sure enough we found him, and happy enough he was to see his beautiful bride. He took us in a coach to the bottom of Gray's Inn Lane, where he had engaged two rooms, and only wished he could have afforded to have taken a house;—but times would mend, he said: besides, it was absolutely necessary to keep his marriage a secret from his family till he became of age, so he was to visit us very privately. My young Lady did not mightily approve of all these precautions, because she feared she should be looked upon as a bad body; but Mr. Egerton soon set her mind at ease, and so she did not even bear his name, for fear his father should get an inkling of the matter. Well, all went on as smooth as a body could wish, till my young Lady laid in
of

of as fine a boy as ever opened his eyes to the light, just ten months and twelve days after our arrival in London. But it pleased God to take the dear mother within an hour after he was born. Mercy upon me, how I did cry and fret; and Mr. Egerton was main grieved himself!—howsoever, he told me I must nurse his poor little boy, which I readily promised to do, for the love I bore its dear mother; and so, after the funeral, to save expence, I was moved into another lodging. But I should have told you, my poor dear Lady was buried in Pancras Church-Yard. Well, the child throve surprisingly; but Mr. Egerton could not spare so much time to visit him, as he did to see its mother; and he soon told me, as it might mar his fortune, he should not now his wife was dead, ever mention his marriage to his father and friends; and as for his son, when he grew up, he would send him to *Ingee*, to a brother he had there, who would provide for him better than he could; so, if I would bring him up, and

continue to keep his secret, he would allow me fifteen pounds a year as long as I lived, whether the child grew up to be a man, or not; but if I let a word escape me about his having married Miss Fanny, and having this boy by her, and of our coming over, and all that, why my wages, as I may call them, was to cease. So for two years, or more, the child continued under my care, but became very subject to convulsions as he grew up, particularly while cutting his teeth, which brought him down very low indeed. My master had been somewhere in foreign parts for some weeks; so finding the poor baby in such a puny state when he came back, he said he would take him down to a friend's in the country for a fortnight or so, to see whether change of air would not be of service to him; but the dear little soul soon followed his mother, he informed me, for I did not go with them. However, my salary has been paid me very punctually ever since, seven pounds ten shillings every half year. But
yesterday

yesterday morning, being in my landlord's shop, he happened to be reading a newspaper, which the pot-boy had just brought him ; and so he asked me if this Frances O'Brien, for the discovery of whom such a large reward was offered, was any kin to the Miss O'Brien I was always talking about.

" Bless us," cried I, " why my poor dear mistress was called Frances ; so he ups and reads me the whole advertisement, as he called it, telling me it would be a fine chance for me, if so be as how I could satisfy the lawyer about her, and that he would find me in snuff all my lifetime, if I would go snacks with him ; but as I told him, if I was to be fortunate, I would not give away my good luck, so I made him read me the paper over and over, and write me down where I was to find Mr. Compton ; and there I hobbled as fast as my old legs would carry me, and he questioned me a great deal, and would not lose sight of me till he had brought me down to your Lordship ; and if your Lordship pleases, I will take my Bible

oath that I have told you all I know about Miss Fanny O'Brien."——

“ And here ends the old woman’s story,” continued the Earl, ceasing to read. “ My daughter I had long supposed dead, therefore was the less shocked at this confirmation of her demise ; and as for my grandson, I could only regret him, as having been my heir. Mr. Egerton’s conduct after his wife’s death, did not please me ; as I plainly perceived he wished to bastardize my grandson, and to stigmatize my daughter’s memory. I also learned from this woman that he had married again within the twelve-month after his first wife’s death, and had three children by his present Lady ; be that as it might, I resolved to make him publicly acknowledge his former marriage, first determining not to lose sight of my old woman, in case he proved refractory. I therefore shipped her off for Cork in a Bristol trader, consigning her to the care of my Irish Steward, who was to keep her in
his

his house till he received my further orders, and to pay her the promised reward as soon as I had convinced myself she had not imposed upon me, which I should easily discover when I saw Mr. Egerton.

“ As soon as she was gone, I began to think of paying that gentleman a visit, wishing to hear what he had to alledge for himself, ere I settled my worldly affairs. But before I left Bristol, I puzzled my brain to discover, in case I died without a will, who would be benefited by such an event; and found the title and estates would devolve to the male heir of Augusta O'Brien, late Countess of Altamont, the eldest of whose sons I knew was in India, and the younger I found was my precious son-in-law.

“ Perfectly acquainted with Lord Irnham's losses, as Colonel O'Hallaran's infant daughter was placed under Lady Irnham's care upon her departure from Calcutta, and unfortunately perished with her kind protectress, and the Viscount's only son, ere they reached their native shore; I thought

there seemed every likelihood that the Earldom and estates would finally centre in Mr. Egerton's family. There were so many people between me and the title when he ran away with my daughter, that I easily supposed it never entered his head that the present Earl of Fitzarran and himself were at all related; but of this I thought I should be a better judge when we met. Away, therefore, I posted to Bath, on my road to London. But my servant, who fancies he knows what I ought, and what I ought not to do, better than I do myself, frequently takes upon him (by the doctor's desire, he persuades me) to regulate my actions; and he decided that I must go into a private lodging, and remain there for a week at least, to recruit my strength, before I proceeded on my journey, declaring he would not accompany me to London till I was better able to travel: so it became a mere chance, as I told him, whether we ever did visit the great city together. But he knows I can't do without him, so I allowed him to have his

his way for once; and on the second morning after my arrival, I got into one of those machines which pop you about like a cork upon water, and suffered myself to be carried to the pump-room, where who should I meet but the Earl of Altamont! I made the discovery (for I was totally unacquainted with his Lordship's person, if not with his private character) from his being pointed out by name to a person I was standing near. Without therefore allowing myself time for reflection, I crawled towards him, and introduced myself to his notice as the only surviving male of the Fitzarran family, who stood between his eldest son and that title. I presumed he was unacquainted with my still nearer connection with his family, from what I had learned from the old Irish woman; and soon found I was not mistaken, but had no reason to complain of the reception he gave me. Half an hour sufficed to make us quite intimate. He accompanied me home, invited himself to dinner with me, and

and even did me the favour to stay supper. It was so natural for a man in my situation to talk of his heirs, that I easily turned the conversation upon his sons.

“ His eldest, he told me, was now Governor of —, in the East-Indies, and his youngest bade fair to obtain a seat upon the woolfack.— ‘ Lord Irnham has no children,’ he proceeded ; ‘ he married for love very early in life, and lost his wife and only son soon after he went into the East. They were cast away upon the French coast on their return.’—

“ All this I knew as well as his communicative Lordship, but did not chuse to break in upon his narrative.—

‘ The Counsellor has two boys and a girl by his wife, and one of the handsomest youths in England, the fruit of a private amour with a young Irish woman, previous to his marriage, and who has very lately married one of the richest widows in the three kingdoms.’—

“ Now

“ Now can you form an idea of my feelings, or of my anxiety, to know more about this *natural son*? The Peer made no scruple of informing me that Charles became acquainted with the boy's mother during a little excursion he had taken with his maternal uncle to the sister kingdom; that her name was Frances O'Brien; that she died in childbirth of this youth; detailing various other circumstances, all tending to convince me that this proscribed son was, if his father and mother were married, my heir, and at all events my grandson.

“ The moment therefore I got rid of my guest (my brother not being yet arrived in England, though he was daily expected), I sent off express for Compton, who, accustomed to my vagaries, and being well paid for his time, arrived in Bath the following evening, and agreed with me in supposing that Counsellor Egerton had either made the old Irish woman believe her pursling was dead, to avoid her future importunities, or she had, by his desire,

told me her plausible story, to put a stop to my intended enquiries. It was therefore become absolutely necessary immediately to establish my daughter's marriage with this unprincipled man, and to force him to acknowledge the legitimacy of the new-married youth, which every concomitant circumstance led me to suppose was my grandson.

“ Compton advised our proceeding cautiously ; and as a preliminary step, set out the following morning for Ireland, to give further orders concerning the old woman, whom he was to cross-question, and to see the Clergyman (if living) whom the certificate stated to have married my daughter. Meanwhile I was to cultivate my acquaintance with Lord Altamont, and to get him to introduce me to Montague O'Brien, (whom I was half crazy to see) before our bustle began. He had not reached Ireland, before I received a most welcome letter from my brave brother, who having landed at Falmouth, had proceeded immediately to the

the Isle of Wight, where his regiment then was, and where, as he foresaw he should be detained for a month, or more, by military business, he requested I would join him. In answer, I wrote him as clear an account as my head would permit, of every thing that had passed respecting my unfortunate daughter, since my return to Great Britain, requesting his immediate advice how to proceed in this strange business.

“ During this time Lord Altamont might be said to live at my lodgings; and it required no great finess on my part, to induce him to enter into various details respecting his sons, and more particularly this very fortunate grandson, who, he informed me, had been brought up abroad, and not publicly acknowledged by his father till within the last five years, when he had been placed in the Army, and had now made his fortune. I tried to get the Earl to introduce me at Lenham, where he informed me the new-married couple then were, but found he was not very certain of meeting
with

with a gracious reception himself; and before I obtained an answer from Colonel O'Hallaran, he received, as he told me, a summons from the Minister, to attend his Parliamentary duty.

“ The weather was so very severe, that I could not, as I had intended, accompany him to Devizes, in hopes I should be able to prevail upon him to call at Lenham in his way thither; and never did time hang more heavily on my hands, than the short interval which elapsed between his departure, and the arrival of my brother's expected letter. He began by again pressing me to join him as soon as the weather broke up, as when together, we could fix upon some plan to force Counsellor Egerton to do my grandson ample justice, without having recourse to lawyers, who were always tedious, and frequently roguish, particularly when a member, of their fraternity was to be attacked in any of the Courts. And as a farther inducement to persuade me to take up my abode in the little island, he informed

me

me that the other regiment, then quartered at Newport, meant to give the Officers of the 22d a *fête* in the course of the ensuing month; and as there was little doubt but Montague O'Brien would be of the party, I should then have an excellent opportunity of seeing, and being introduced to him, and of hearing his own story of himself, which I ought to be thoroughly acquainted with before I visited his father; promising to accompany me to London at my own time, to assist me in bringing the Counsellor to reason; though he really entertained great hopes we should not find this so difficult a task as we might imagine.

“Anxious as I was to assert my grandson's claims, I felt the justice of his reasoning, and resolved, as soon as the roads became rather more passable, to visit the Isle of Wight, and wrote to him accordingly, desiring him to procure me a pleasant habitation near the sea, having been advised by my Bath physician, to try the low sea air for my complaint.

“In

“ In as short a time as any person in such dreadful weather could have performed such a journey, Compton returned, having succeeded beyond his hopes in his embassy. In the first place, he had seen the Clergyman who had married my poor girl, and also the clerk who had given her away, therefore the legality of my grandson's claims would be very easily established, he observed ; and, lastly, that the old woman, though she swore she had told me the truth to the best of her knowledge, declared she had had her doubts of her nursing's death at the time ; and she had since heard from Mr. Egerton's servants, that he had a natural son : but as her annuity depended upon her silence, she had chosen to believe what her master had told her respecting the child.

“ This pleasing intelligence did me more good than all my medical attendant's prescriptions ; and as soon as the weather grew rather milder, I proceeded to the Isle of Wight, having desired Compton to draw up
a short

a short statement of the whole affair, and to dispatch it to me thither.

“ I need not tell you, my dear boy,” turning to Montague, “ how we met, how much I was struck with your figure, nor all those *et ceteras* you are clearly acquainted with. Colonel O'Hallaran and myself, you know, set off rather hastily for the metropolis; and I thought every second an hour during our journey. To Compton's we drove; and by his advice, waited upon one of the first Counsellors in England, wishing to pit one *honourable* gentleman against another. Unfortunately Mr. E—— was not in town; I was therefore forced to wait his return before I introduced myself to my son-in-law. I will not expatiate upon my impatience during this interval; suffice it to say, he found me at his chambers when he did arrive, and I gave him Compton's narrative to read, and made him explain some things, while I explained others. This really clever gentleman soon decided how to act, and immediately dispatched his clerk to Counsellor Egerton's,

Egerton's, requesting him to appoint the earliest hour he could make it convenient to see him the next morning, upon business of very great importance.

“ Hoping, no doubt, a very handsome fee would be the result of the requested interview, this honourable gentleman appointed ten o'clock, at which hour Mr. E——, the Colonel, and myself stopped at his door. We were received in his office; and the former, in much fewer words than I have done, and in their own jargon, made him understand why we had intruded upon his precious time. My gentleman began to bounce, but old soldiers are not easily frightened. I shewed him the certificate, told him Dame O'Rielly was safely lodged at my Irish seat; and, finally, bade him determine to do my daughter and grandson ample justice, if he wished to preserve himself from a suit, which must eventually not only terminate in his dishonour, but in his ruin.

“ At

“ At first he wanted to defer his determination; but upon Mr. E—’s proposing he should be allowed a short time to recollect himself, I permitted him to withdraw, and he promised I should have his final answer in half an hour. I gave him to understand I would not wait a moment longer; so at the expiration of that time he re-appeared, and with the best grace he could assume, acknowledged his eldest, hitherto misnamed his natural son, was his heir, and my grandson.

“ He then endeavoured to gloss over his base attempt to deprive my noble boy of his birthright, but I had not patience to listen to him; I only insisted upon his returning with me to Southampton, that he might as publicly clear, as he had publicly traduced, my daughter’s honour. Having assured me he should hold himself in readiness to obey my summons, I left his house with a full determination of leaving London the following morning; but while returning to Mr. E—’s chambers, he suggested
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the propriety of making Lord St. Osyth acquainted with the Counsellor's recent acknowledgment. I could have no objection to such a measure, therefore immediately proceeded to Whitehall; and having met with a most encouraging reception, I entered upon my story, concluding by informing his Lordship I meant to set out for Southampton the following morning; where, as a small atonement for his past behaviour, I intended to oblige the Counsellor publicly to acknowledge the legitimacy of his eldest son's birth.

“ Lord St. Osyth began by congratulating me upon having so easily established what might have proved a work of time, had the Counsellor had recourse to any of the subterfuges, which a very honourable profession (for such he must ever think the law) sometimes afforded its members. Mr. Egerton had certainly acted wisely, and he trusted his ready acknowledgment was the fruit of repentance; at all events, he thought the less he was exposed, the less
his

his nearest connections would be put to the blush. He then invited me to breakfast with him the next morning, observing, the interval would afford us both time for reflection, and he really thought no rash steps ought to be taken in a matter of such importance.

“ I must own I gave up my former plan with reluctance, but wishing to hear what his Lordship had to propose, I attended him at the appointed time, accompanied by Colonel O'Hallaran; and he then so clearly pointed out to me that I could not publicly punish the father without wounding the feelings, if not rather lowering the son, I agreed to let the honourable Barrister make as *honourable* a retreat as the circumstances would admit. He was in consequence summoned to join our party, and informed by Lord St. Osyth that I was prepared to listen to his defence, and anxious like himself, for his son's sake, to find him able to make some excuses for his late conduct,

likely to pass current with the world in general.

“ Mr. Egerton, glad no doubt of so unexpected a reprieve, made a very elaborate speech to prove the uprightness of his intentions, declaring that his love for his present wife had led him into all his errors. He might have made a worse plea ; and this we agreed should be mentioned as the ostensible reason for his duplicity, assuring him he might enlarge upon his remorse, and intentions of doing his proscribed son justice in all security, as we should connive at every thing likely to repair the breach his honour must necessarily sustain, for the sake of his innocent family. Thus tutored, we suffered him to depart, when Lord St. Osyth observed, it had ever been his intention to endeavour to obtain a Peerage for his son-in-law ; he therefore thought, if I suffered him to procure me a private audience with our beloved Monarch, to whom I might relate my story, the second title of my family might be revived in favour of my grandson,

grandson, which would be far preferable to his assuming the name of Egerton : indeed, if I wished it, he was convinced I should easily obtain permission from his Majesty for him, in addition to his title, only to bear the name of O'Brien, and merely the arms annexed to my family.

“ Nothing could more exactly accord with my wishes than this last proposal ; I therefore immediately visited with his Lordship another great man, now at the helm, who promised to break the matter to our Monarch, hinting, an English Barony ought to be annexed to the more honorary title we hoped to obtain. Suffice it to say, thanks to the best of Kings, and your kind father-in-law, my dear boy, you will very soon, by Act of Parliament, assume the name of O'Brien, to which you will add that of Viscount Delmont, in the kingdom of Ireland, and Baron Delmont, of Delmont, in the kingdom of England. So now give me your hand once more, my beloved Irish lad, and your's too, my lovely grand-
F 2 daughter,

daughter, while I bless you both, sincerely hoping the future will make you, my dear Montague, ample amends for the past, and that every succeeding year will bring you increase of happiness; and when you are summoned to pay the debt of nature, may those who will inherit your honours, be sincere in their grief, and they cannot fail to transmit them untarnished to posterity!"

Lord St. Osyth was not less sincere in his congratulations and good wishes, nor were Colonel O'Hallaran's less acceptable to the truly happy pair. The Counsellor, though last to speak, was perhaps the most profuse of his words: he solemnly affirmed he had ever meant to do his eldest son justice, declared himself a true penitent, and concluded by protesting no one rejoiced more sincerely in his *beloved* Montague's approaching honours. O'Brien was certainly no more his dupe now, than when he received his congratulatory letter upon his marriage;

marriage ; still duty and policy both induced him to affect to believe his protestations : he also hoped the late events would make no alteration in their former plans, for he was impatient to resign his commission to his brother.

“ Nobly remembered, my brave boy,” cried Lord Fitzarran ; “ I knew the first time I saw you, you had some true Irish blood in your veins ; but now remember, Counsellor, though I shall immediately introduce my young kinsman to all his former friends as my grandson, I shall enter into no further details ; those who are impertinent enough to ask for any explanation, I shall refer to you for satisfaction, because, do you see, I must inform them he is no bastard.”

“ While your Lordship, your grandson, and myself continue friends with Mr. Egerton,” said Lord St. Osyth, “ the world will not be inclined to scrutinize his conduct. We all wish to save that gentle-

man's honour ; still we must do your late daughter and our young relation justice. We will therefore briefly tell our friends that love occasioned the Counsellor's errors ; and while we extenuate, who shall dare condemn his past behaviour ?”

“ I am convinced my father intended to do me justice,” said Montague ; “ I am only sorry the respect I owe my mother's memory, will oblige me to acknowledge I have hitherto been kept in ignorance of my legal claims to his affection, else would I readily have said I was in my father's secrets, and had connived at the concealment of my birth upon my mother-in-law's account. But no more of the subject ; my future behaviour shall convince the world I can shew a proper regard for my deceased mother's fame, without presuming to arraign my father's conduct towards myself.”

“ Right, my dear boy ; and if your father's heart is not quite callous, your behaviour must make him deeply feel the extent of his former injustice.”

The

The Counsellor bit his lips, and walked to one of the windows; but soon turning round again, said, "Will you favour me with a few minutes' private conversation, *Egerton*? You have convinced me *you* can feel for your penitent father, and can appreciate the motives which led him to err, or I had not made the request."

Without replying, Montague conducted him into his dressing-room, which joined the library; and had scarcely closed the door, before the Counsellor burst into tears of rage, or, as he would have said, of repentance, and paced the room with such violence, that Montague was absolutely startled. At last approaching, and seizing his son's hand, he exclaimed, in a smothered voice—

"Remember, my reputation depends upon our continuing upon intimate, nay, friendly terms. I have acted wrong—I know, I feel I have erred! You cannot sincerely forgive me. Yet spare my honour, and

excuse my conduct; don't hold me up to the scorn of your friends! I know both your wife and Lord Fitzarran despise me. Lord St. Osyth also treats me with contempt; yet this, and worse, have I doomed myself to bear: I was too precipitate!" Then suddenly pausing—"My thoughts are quite bewildered; but I called you from your exulting friends to observe, I am fearful, all things considered, my youngest son will object to accept your commission."

"Why so, my dear Sir?" replied Montague; "admitting for a moment that people, unacquainted with your motives, should presume to censure your behaviour towards me, can you think any officer, or any man of honour, would suppose your sons were answerable for your actions? In that case, surely I have as much reason to dread entering the Guards, as my brother can have to succeeding me; but I will be answerable for his meeting with every politeness and encouragement from the whole

whole corps; therefore let me request you will send him down as speedily as possible."

"You may be right; my children are certainly innocent of my errors; he shall join you in the course of next week;—as for myself, the sooner I am upon the road to London, the better. I do not wish to be present, during your introduction to your friends as Lord Fitzarran's grandson: besides, I have really a multiplicity of business in hand, which I have totally neglected for the last three days. I shall therefore travel all night; let no one know of my intention till I am gone."

"Suffer me, at least, to order my carriage to be got ready to take you to Winchester."

"Not for the universe! I will walk to Southampton, where I can immediately procure a chaise. Can't you let me out by some private door, that I may escape unseen?"

“What can you have to fear, my dear Sir? I cannot bear your stealing thus furtively away; allow me to accompany you to the inn. I will just step and let Lady Albury know where I am going; let me entreat you to wait my return.”

“It may be best; I believe you mean well, Montague; you must make allowances for the agitation of my mind.”

O'Brien hastily returned into the library, to inform the party assembled there whither he was going. They could make no objections, though Lord Fitzarran observed it was more than the Counsellor deserved; however, he would take the opportunity of his absence to mention their relationship to the friends they had left in the eating-room. Accordingly, while Montague set out on foot with the Counsellor, Lady Albury and the three gentlemen joined the Mr. Melcombes, and the Officers who were assembled in the saloon.

Lord

Lord Fitzarran scarcely allowed the company to resume their seats, before he told them he was grandfather to the master of the house; adding—"Mr. Egerton's first wife was his mother, and my daughter. Now as to why he has been hitherto thought to be only that gentleman's natural son, and all the other whys and wherefores which will naturally strike you, gentlemen, I must refer you to the Counsellor himself, sensible, from my want of talents, I should only injure his cause, were I to undertake his defence."

Perhaps none of the company rejoiced more sincerely at the unexpected intelligence, than Henry Melcombe. His father was happy that his son had made himself an interest in Montague's friendship before he became so great a man; as the Earl soon informed them what honours he had in store, and that he would inherit his title and estates when he died."

The Officers were all anxious to congratulate the general favourite, of the whole

corps, who soon returned, after having seen his father leave Southampton, undoubtedly in better spirits than when he arrived.

That his very abrupt departure might be the less noticed, Lord St. Osyth observed, "he must start very early in the morning, therefore thought he had better sleep in the town."—But neither Montague nor his daughter would hear of his leaving them, declaring he should be their guest for the night; and as for Lord Fitzarran, and the Colonel, they did not mean to set them at liberty while they could prevail upon them to stay.

The Mr. Melcombes wished to have returned to the Dolphin; but their objections to staying, which merely originated in the fears they entertained that their apartments might be wanted for the accommodation of the Peers, or the Colonel, were completely overruled, as there were still beds to spare.

The

The recent discovery had so increased the gaiety of the family party, that their guests had seldom spent a more agreeable evening.

Henry, who had been particularly introduced by Montague to both the Earl and Lord St. Osyth, as his most intimate friend and country neighbour, felt unusually elated; while the merchant, confident that *Lord Delmont* would not become a candidate for the county of Wilts himself, thought his son's success certain, when, as he doubted not, it would be supported by this great man's interest.

Lord Fitzarran declared he felt himself twenty years younger, and quite free from all complaint.

Lord St. Osyth *now really* gloried in his son-in-law, and with all the finesse of a true-bred courtier, seized every opportunity to raise the youth's vanity, by various delicate, though

though indirect compliments, addressed to his person, military skill, &c.

Colonel O'Hallaran increased the general hilarity by his native drollery, and amused the company with several excellent songs after supper, who did not separate till a very late hour, and then only in consideration of Lord St. Osyth's early departure.

CHAP. VI.

BEFORE he retired to his apartment, the last-mentioned Peer had requested Montague would give orders that four hack horses might be in readiness by six o'clock, (he had come down in his own postchaise) as he meant to breakfast at Winchester, being particularly averse to deranging any of the family at so early an hour.

In reply to his first request, O'Brien told him his own horses should be in readiness at the time he mentioned, if it was absolutely necessary for him to start so very early; but even in that case he should not

leave

leave his house fasting—he must see him before he set out ; he should think of a thousand things he wished to say to him before morning, and he could speak a great deal better than he could write.”

“ Then let us breakfast *tête-à-tête* by half past seven,” replied his Lordship ; “ I only wish the duties of my office would permit me a longer stay ;—but I hope you will soon be a resident in London ; I shall then devote most of my leisure hours to your and my daughter’s society.”

Lord St. Osyth’s first reception of Montague had greatly prejudiced him in that Nobleman’s favour. His behaviour upon the recent discovery had increased the esteem he bore him ; his delicate, insinuating flattery having had every proposed effect, he therefore considered his last intimation as an additional favour, and retired to rest in a frame of mind exactly calculated to procure him a sound, refreshing sleep, from which, according to the orders he had given, he

was

was disturbed soon after seven, and found, notwithstanding his diligence, Lord St. Osyth had preceded him into the breakfast room. They had scarcely exchanged their mutual compliments before Lord Fitzarran joined them, observing, "he had never yet been taken by surprise, though Subalterns sometimes had it in their power to betray their Commanders. But my servant," he continued, "kept a tolerable look-out for me this morning; so, with your permission, I will also take a cup of tea, for somehow I think the very sight of that fine young man promotes my happiness."

Lord St. Osyth expressed his satisfaction at seeing him in such excellent spirits, and Montague hoped he had had a good night.

"I don't know when I have slept so well, or so long, my dear boy. I find a clear conscience is a great promoter of repose; mine was hardly so before I had confessed all my past errors, and seen you reinstated

reinstated in your rights, my jewel. As for Counsellor Egerton, he ought to be a strong man to bear the weight of his private reflections; for I must ever think him— Well, no matter what; his repentance, or whatever he pleases to call his acknowledging your rights, has saved me from the glorious uncertainty of the law; and I know, the very fear of not living to have seen the suit finished, would have proved my death; therefore, so far I acknowledge my obligations to Mr. Egerton.”

“Is the Earl of Altamont acquainted with the recent events, my dear Sir?” asked Montague.

“To oblige Lord St. Osyth, I called at what the noble owner has dignified by the name of Altamont House. The great man was out of town; so I merely left a very short explanatory letter to be given him when he returned, and have no doubt we shall soon receive his very *sincere* congratulations.”

“His

"His Lordship's reigning foible is, I believe, pretty generally known," said Lord St. Osyth; "he absolutely ran the risk of breaking his neck during our late severe weather, so anxious was he to obtain a sinecure in the gift of one of my colleagues; fortunately, I know the Minister thought, he was too late in his application."

"So, so, I find he went upon more pressing, than parliamentary duty," observed Montague.

He then mentioned their meeting at Marlborough, and amused his auditors with the auction at Castle Irnham. They were both laughing very heartily, and lamenting they had not seen the cook in her exalted situation, when they saw (as the windows of the room they were sitting in, faced the great road) the London mail-coach stop directly opposite the house.

"Some dispatches for me, most probably," said Lord St. Osyth.

He

He was still speaking, when the steps having been previously let down by the guard, the very person who had occasioned their recent mirth, made his appearance.

“ Lord Altamont, by all that’s wonderful,” his Lordship continued.

“ Now I wish, my good friend, you would be after telling me where the wonder lies ?” said Lord Fitzarran.

“ In his having made use of the mail, Sir,” rejoined the laughing Montague, “ instead of the *caterpillar*, a long coach which carries sixteen, at half a guinea a head, much in vogue among our inferior Officers.”

By this time the newly arrived Peer had nearly reached the steps. Montague therefore stepped out to meet him, prepared for a repetition of the Marlborough scene.

“ Ah, my dear fellow, what up already ? I am glad to find you are such an early riser ;

riſer; the morning air is particularly conducive to health: I could not reſt till I had offered you my congratulations. I met your unworthy father haſtening back to town, to hide his guilty head. I did not addreſs him, nor ſhall I ever again; all the affection I once felt for him, I here transfer to his much-injured ſon."

Lord Fitzarran, who overheard the concluding ſentence, haſtened into the hall, to put a ſtop to theſe affected tranſports, at the moment the enraptured Peer had caught this now beloved grandſon in his arms.

"Zounds! man, don't ſtrangle my own Iriſh boy!" he cried.

"Ah! my good old friend, how are you?"

"As happy as mortal can be in this vale of miſery I am certain. I could not reſt after I had peruſed your kind letter, till I had

had seen my grandson. How is Lady Albury?"

Montague requested he would walk in, saying, "We are at breakfast; a cup of tea will refresh you after travelling all night."

"I believe it will; though I came upon too agreeable an errand to be sensible of fatigue."

"God grant me patience!" muttered Lord Fitzarran to himself, as he crossed the room to his chair.

Lord St. Osyth smiled, and now came in for his full share of congratulations. Willing, if possible, to put a check to his unfeeling volubility, Lord Fitzarran observed, he should not have supposed the recent discovery would have to him appeared such a very pleasant circumstance.

"I am sensible," replied Lord Altamont, "my son has not acted like a man of honour, my old friend; therefore, henceforth I shall consider him as an alien to my blood. I am not more prone to
forgive

forgive errors in my own children, than in those of other people."

"I have heard as much before," replied Lord Fitzarran, accompanied by a look that enforced the meaning, but which was utterly lost upon the callous Lord Altamont, who seated himself near the table, enquiring how this *fortunate* discovery had been brought about, and what his son had been able to alledge in extenuation of his criminality."

Lord St. Osyth took upon himself to satisfy this *feeling* father, which he did in a very concise manner, and in terms the least calculated to wound a parent's heart.

Lord Fitzarran's hint had put Lord Altamont rather more upon his guard; he therefore listened in silence to this very short recital, then declared, repugnant as it was to his feelings, he must repeat that Counsellor Egerton was not a man of honour; and were he to afford him the least countenance, the world in general would,
from

from such mistaken lenity, infer he was privy to the iniquitous concealment. He had been peculiarly unfortunate in his sons, but his daughters were truly deserving a parent's love; and he had the satisfaction to reflect, his title and estate would most probably ultimately devolve to his dear O'Brien."

"Permit me to ask one question, my Lord," interrupted the Earl of Fitzarran; "you have long known my Irish boy—upwards of four years according to your own account; yet notwithstanding you are now ready to fall down and worship him, you suffered him to starve upon the pay of an Ensign for nearly the time I mention. I speak feelingly; for I know, by dire experience, he could barely exist upon such a pittance."

"You quite astonish me, Lord Fitzarran. Mr. Egerton repeatedly told me he had made his son an ample allowance, in addition to his pay; and I considered his recent marriage as a proof of the truth of his assertion, because it convinced me that he
moved

moved in the first circles. Why, my dear Montague, did you not make your situation known to me? I am sensible I ought to have been more minute in my enquiries, for I am sorry to say, I was every way your father's dupe."

Montague could have retorted, and felt far less inclined to spare this boasting miser, than he had done to shield his father from disgrace; yet he merely said, "his claims upon Lord Altamont's bounty had hitherto been of too feeble a nature to have justified such an application;—his father had rose to eminence in his profession by his own industry and exertions, therefore wished him to do the same, and had certainly pursued the right method to keep him out of the way of dissipation; but he intended not to revert to the past."

“ You are too generous, my dear Montague,” replied the half disconcerted Peer.—
“ These rolls are positively excellent.”—
This eulogium was bestowed upon the third

he had eaten.—“Your father ought to feel himself very much obliged to you. Hitherto his name has stood foremost in my will—I don’t say it will remain so.”

“And pray, why not?” asked the Irish Peer; “whatever have been his errors, he is your son, and has children he must wish to provide for. My boy will immediately share my fortune, in addition to his wife’s, therefore stands in very little need of your bounty; and as for Lord Irnham, you cannot deprive him of your title and estate; and believe me, he is in no want of your savings. My brother-in-law and he are intimate friends; and he has told me your son has honourably acquired a princely fortune, which he expends in continual acts of benevolence. I should glory in such a relation, and even feel proud he is my boy’s uncle; therefore let me advise you to make no alteration in the disposition of your property, for of all places in the world, pique should never find its way into a man’s will.”

Lord

Lord Altamont did not enjoy being treated so freely ; but he had come down with a determination not to be offended with this *odd invalid*, as he termed the Irishman, therefore even acquiesced in the justice of his remarks. Then turning to Lord St. Osyth, he hoped he should, ere long, see his grandson nearer the helm."

"God forbid your hopes should be realized during your life or mine!" hastily exclaimed the Milesian. "Montague is a noble-spirited, generous youth, but still less fit to be a Minister than myself; and I trust he will never accept of any of those snug sinecures, so much sought after by the needy and avaricious. In Lord St. Osyth he has an excellent example—he does not eat the bread of idleness. I revere a man in his situation, when, like him, they do their duty, and owe their elevation to their superior talents ; and even he, I am convinced, despises those who solicit places or pensions as the reward of their loyalty. If no one accepted bribes, there would be no corrup-

tion at elections, or elsewhere; so, as I said before, till he is arrived at an age to discriminate who to reward among the mercenary crew that ever surround men in power, God keep my boy from the helm! I wish to see him stand high in the opinion of his country neighbours. He made himself friends in adversity—may he continue to do so in prosperity! and should his liberality ever straiten his circumstances, he may adopt your Lordship's method of travelling, without fearing the censure of the world."

These plain hints were very unpleasant. Lord Altamont, with difficulty, forced a laugh; and before he could make any other reply, Lord St. Osyth's post-chaise drew up to the door.

"Who have we got here?" he exclaimed,

"My carriage and my son's horses," replied the former. "Have you any commands in London, as I expect to dine at Whitehall."

"Already

“Already upon the wing! To be sure, national business must not be neglected. Indeed I must set out upon my return myself to night, or to-morrow. But I was too anxious to offer my personal congratulations to my grandson, to consider the fatigue I might encounter. I have therefore really a vast fancy to accompany your Lordship, as I have accomplished my errand; yet I should wish to see Lady Albury. Are you so tied to time, that an hour can make any great difference?”

The appearance of the lady he had been enquiring after, who had hastened down to pay her respects to her father before he left Southampton, put a stop to his harangue, and Lord Fitzarran advised him to be brief, if he meant to return with the Minister.

Lady Albury, whom he immediately assailed with compliments and congratula-

tions, was fearful he would too much fatigue himself.

“ By no means—such a travelling companion was not always to be met with ;—to enjoy Lord St. Osyth’s conversation, he would cheerfully undergo any personal inconvenience ; and he did not foresee his intended journey was likely to be attended with any such circumstances.”

Neither Montague nor her Ladyship felt inclined to press his stay ; he was therefore permitted to set out upon his return within half an hour after his arrival : but greatly repented his precipitation, when he learned from his companion the honours which still awaited his grandson, finding he had not performed above half his errand, and had now reduced himself to the necessity of addressing his congratulations to the future Lord Delmont upon this event, in writing.

Soon

Soon after the Peers had drove from the door, Colonel O'Hallaran and the Mr. Melcombes made their appearance, and were soon acquainted with the very short visit the Earl of Altamont had paid his grandchildren.

The Colonel declared he had long ceased to wonder at any of that Nobleman's actions, Lord Irnham having, long since, taught him to appreciate his real motives."

"You are particularly intimate with my uncle, Colonel?" said Montague

"I can boast of that honour, my young friend; for a more amiable man does not exist. Do you know you remind me of what he was when he first came to India; and even now there is a very strong resemblance between you. I hope he means to revisit England in the course of this year."

He then entered into several details respecting his Lordship, which the reader is

already acquainted with, and spoke so warmly in his praise, that Montague looked forward with infinite pleasure to the moment of his introduction to one member of his father's family, whose principles he could respect, and whose conduct he felt desirous to imitate.

As Mr. Melcombe, senior, proposed returning to London on the Monday, he thought it necessary, it being Saturday, to pay a visit to High Clere, observing, "Sunday was, of all days in the year, the most improper for him to visit his sister; because they should, without a doubt, quarrel whenever she was not singing hymns, or reading Methodistical essays."

Henry was to remain at Southampton during Montague's stay there, with the entire approbation of his father, who thought O'Brien, though so very rich and great a man, was, from being married, much less likely to lead him into unprofitable dissipation

tion than his City friends:—besides, he would derive both honour and advantage from so (in every respect) desirable a connection. But not wishing for a *tête-à-tête* with the good lady he was going to visit, he requested him to accompany him to Mrs. Balfour's, while Montague attended his military duty, and received the compliments of those Officers who were not at his villa the preceding day.

Mrs. Balfour, to the merchant's infinite joy, was not at home; he therefore left a short note, to be given her when she returned; very happy he had, as he vainly hoped, escaped an interview with the enthusiastic fanatic, whose intemperate piety was frequently made subservient to her worldly views, and served as a cloak for her abominable avarice, love of drinking, &c. as she never failed of finding a scriptural excuse for every deviation from the rule of right.

CHAP. VII.

LADY ALBURY always made a point of attending divine service on a Sunday morning. Her guests were therefore all assembled earlier than usual the following day, meaning to accompany her to Church; and were just sitting down to breakfast when her Ladyship, who was standing near one of the windows, exclaimed, "What have we got here?"

The gentlemen approached to see what had excited her wonder, and perceived, standing at the iron gate in front of the house, a long tilted cart, drawn by a horse, that

that appeared to be just emerged from a straw-yard, or to have been taken from a bleak common, where he had probably spent the winter. There were various flits in the tilt, which might be denominated air-holes by those inclined to put a very favourable construction upon appearances.

The driver of this elegant equipage was equally as shabby as the machine, and quite as meagre as the unfortunate animal he was doomed to whip along. He was in the act of opening the gate, when Montague presumed it was some friends of the Southampton servants, as some mean-looking females were alighting; and was, with her Ladyship, turning away, when Henry Melcombe, having caught a glimpse of a tall awkward girl jumping off the shaft, called out—

“My cousin Balfour, by Jupiter!”

“Impossible!” said his father. The appearance of the younger girl, who took

the same method to display her agility, put the matter beyond a doubt.—“How can my sister send them by such a conveyance?” he proceeded; “I presume they are come to ask me to dinner, or some such nonsense.”

“And here comes my aunt,” rejoined Henry, “to enforce her request.”

Nor was he mistaken, that lady being literally crawling from under the tilt, which had hitherto concealed her from their view. With some difficulty, and by the help of a fool, which had been her feat, she descended from the shaft of her carriage, and prepared to enter the court.

“Why what can have induced this whining, canting old hypocrite to take so unprecedented a liberty?” said the provoked merchant. “I hope, Lady Albury, you will believe they are uninvited guests.”

“Not they indeed, my good Sir,” replied Montague; “depend upon it this visit
is

is to Lady Albury and me. I requested Mrs. Balfour would look in upon us."

"And you don't know, Mr. Melcombe, how much I am obliged to her for having gratified the curiosity I have long felt to see her," said her Ladyship. "You allow her to be a very great original."

"Then she and I must be better acquainted," said the Earl.

By this time Mrs. Balfour had stroked down her apron, dismissed her carriage, and four attendant females, and followed by her daughters, was stalking forward, a long crook stick in one hand, and her hymn book in the other. Unfortunately, some dispute arose between the young ladies as they entered the court, and the youngest struck her sister with no small degree of vehemence. The blow was returned with interest; and such was the war of words which succeeded, that the mother was obliged to face about, and command silence.

"My

"My aunt's *lamb*s play very roughly," remarked the diverted Henry.

"I will positively go and send her and her brats about their business," said his father.

"You positively shall not stir a step," said Lady Albury; and Montague desired the servant in waiting to shew them in.

Mrs. Balfour advanced with slow and solemn steps. Montague received, and presented her to Lady Albury, Lord Fitzarran, and Colonel O'Hallaran. This ceremony over, the good lady requested she might not derange them;—she could not stop a moment; but wishing to see her brother before he left Southampton, she had seized the opportunity to pay her respects to Lady Albury and Mr. O'Brien."

"I must entreat you would take a chair, Ma'am," said her Ladyship. "Have you breakfasted?"

"My regard for truth obliges me to acknowledge we are yet fasting, my Lady.

I spent

I spent the greatest part of yesterday, and no inconsiderable portion of the night, praying by the bed-side of a penitent sinner, who departed this life between two and three this morning; it was a melancholy scene, though it is what we ought frequently to contemplate."

"Lady Albury is not a Methodist, sister?" cried the merchant; "and what your praying and watching have to do with your not having breakfasted, I am unable to fathom."

"I was going to explain, Mr. Melcombe," whined out the pious lady. "I unfortunately overslept myself; and having ordered my conveyance to be at the door rather sooner than usual, owing to the visit I had in contemplation, we had not finished prayers when it arrived; and I could not think of keeping either the ladies who came with me, or the poor horse in the cold; so we are going to break our fast at a friend's."

"And pray, sister, does the elegant machine from which you alighted, belong

to you, or is it in common between you and the women who are gone forward?"

"You know, brother, I have long renounced the pomps and vanities of this world. This machine belongs to an honest labourer; and what are we any of us but labourers in the vineyard of the Lord? I despise no one; charity induces me to make use of this conveyance."

"Your charity, like your religion, is upon a very contracted scale, sister, to judge from the appearance of your fellow-labourer and his horse. Pray how much may that truly divine virtue induce you to give upon these occasions? But perhaps you pay by the head?"

"No, brother, we give three shillings a day, be there more or less, and pay the turnpike, which, let me tell you, considering this would otherwise be an idle day for the horse, is no small gain: besides, our driver can, by this means, attend his duty."

"Well, well, you may fancy it very meritorious to deprive the poor animal of
its

its only chance of a holiday ; but I do not want to discuss the point with you, because you may keep the friends with whom you are going to breakfast, waiting."

Lady Albury hoped she could break her engagement, and favour her with her company. There needed no farther persuasion ; the good lady readily took a seat, and her daughters followed her example ; the youngest calling out, " I wish somebody else would take the tea and sugar, else I shall have that to lug about all day. Make sister take it, mama ; I am sure she is better able to carry it."

" Betsey, my dear, I request you would never presume to mix in the conversation. I shall really be very angry with you."

" I am sure I don't care ; I only wish Captain Wilson was here ; he would take it I know, for he is ten times as good-natured as sister."

" Oh, pray how is the Captain, aunt ?" enquired Henry.

" I hope

“ I hope he is well in health, nephew,” whined out the old woman ; “ but——” She made a long pause.

“ Well, mama,” cried the young one, “ why don’t you tell cousin what is the matter, else I will.”

“ Betsey, my dear, you don’t know how you wound my feelings.”

“ La ! mama, I don’t know what you mean ; but I know cousin will laugh when he hears what has happened, for I am sure I did ; I only wish I may ever have such a nice ride. Hang carts, say I !”

“ I believe that naughty girl is possessed this morning ; though, poor dear lamb, she knows no better. Poor Captain Wilson has been peculiarly unfortunate since I have had the honour of seeing you, Mr. O’Brien ; a family affair has obliged him to leave our neighbourhood almost at a moment’s notice. It certainly was his duty to hasten to console his afflicted father. None but parents can conceive what a father or mother’s

mother's feelings are, when their children swerve from the paths of righteousness."

"Miss Wilson has run away with the footman," cried Betsey; "now was not she in the right, cousin Harry? Mama says Scotland is ever so far off; and they are gone in a chaise. I only wish they had taken me with them."

"Now, Betsey, depend upon it, unwilling as I have hitherto been to part with you, to school you shall go, let what will be the consequence of such a step. Do you ever hear your sister interrupt me so rudely? I really, Lady Albury, blush for my rude girl, though her errors merely proceed from excess of innocence."

"From excess of folly you mean," said the merchant. "Innocence, forsooth! the girl does not want for sense, and if you do put her to school, she may make a clever woman: if a child must prate, I am for their speaking the truth. Should not you like to go to school, Betsey?"

"Indeed

“ Indeed I should, uncle ; for I am often ready to eat my fingers before we have done prayers. I wanted this morning to have had a bit of bread and butter before we left home ; but mama told me the primitive Christians never ate at all on a Sunday ; and I am sure we have only a twopenny loaf amongst us all, when we breakfast at old dame Wildham’s.”

The merchant laughed, to allow the company an opportunity to give way to their mirth ; but told Betsey she talked too much.

Mrs. Balfour could hardly refrain from boxing her lamb’s ears, yet even affected to join in the general laugh ; and by way of changing the discourse, hoped Lady Albury would honour her so far, as to visit High Clere during her stay at Southampton. Her Ladyship promised to look in upon her.

Betsey

Betsey began to caper about. "How glad I am, how glad I am! You will come too, cousin Harry; and Mr. O'Brien must if my Lady does."

"You have quite won my little girl's heart, Mr. O'Brien. But may I expect your Ladyship this day week? It is but seldom I have it in my power to treat my friends as I could wish; but then Mr. Cantwell——"

"That is enough, sister!" interrupted the merchant.

His manner of delivery, more than his words, excited a general smile.

"Nay, brother, you might have allowed me to proceed; every one is not so great a worshipper of mammon as yourself."

"I shall not dispute that, or any other point with you, sister; I only wish to put this good company upon their guard; for on one of those days, when you are trying to take Heaven by storm, I am very much
afraid

afraid your cooking will be neglected ; and as for one of your family dinners, they would consider sitting down to it as great a penance, as if they were obliged to hear your favourite Cantwell hold forth."

" I shall certainly call upon you, Ma'am, before I leave this neighbourhood," said Lady Albury. " High Clere is a very pleasant place, according to Mr. O'Brien's account."

" I wish I could tempt your Ladyship to take up your abode there ; the air is particularly salubrious, and the inhabitants are, in general, true primitive Christians, who look up to me as their guardian Angel. I have certainly been making great exertions for their future benefit, should I be suddenly called away. I am daily laying the pious under contributions, and have already purchased the ground where, during the summer, I hope to be able to erect a comfortable place of worship ;—may I hope the present company will advance a trifle to forward so righteous a plan ? I mean not to offend,

offend, but I always persevere in doing my duty in any company, and I never can be in better."

"In the name you so often profane, sister, I request you would give up your pitiful trade. As for myself, I would not advance you one shilling for such absurd purposes; and I hope the Minister of the parish will put an effectual stop to your absurdity, deluding the ignorant multitude with your false doctrine: 'tis only a pity such fanaticism should be countenanced by Government. You are for ever engaged in some of these absurd undertakings; there is always some needy psalm-singer or other inducing you to make a fool of yourself for their benefit. This is Cantwell's project, I would lay my life. Your children look, and complain with justice, of being half starved, while you squander your money upon such would-be divines; with all your pretensions to primitive Christianity, I begin to fancy you are a Jew!"

"Lal

“La! uncle,” cried the young one, laughing, “only think of calling mama a Jew! Why she can’t abide those naughty people; but do persuade my Lady, and my Lord, and all the company to come to our house, because then I am sure we shall have a nice hot dinner, perhaps a plum-pudding; and to-day we have only got half a cold pig’s head, mustard, and potatoes;—not a bit of bread, because ’tis dear, and very extravagant, mama says; and we shall only have water to drink, because ’tis a sin to send to the alehouse on Sundays; and dame Wildham never has any of her own.”

Lady Albury found it impossible to conceal a smile, and the young men were unable to suppress their laughter, which so provoked the mild lady, that she started up to seize the young culprit, meaning to turn her out of the room. Betsey was not so easily caught, as she kept dodging round her highly diverted uncle’s chair, till tired
with

with the fruitless attempt, Mrs. Balfour was obliged to resume her seat.

“Do, uncle, ask mama to let me stay here while she goes to meeting!”

“I am not at home here,” he replied.

“Well, but could not you beg Lady Albury? She looks so good-natured; and I am sure Mr. O’Brien can’t frown to ask me to dinner. I assure you I would be very good.”

The last request was made in an audible whisper. The merchant shook his head.

“What are you whispering about, Betty?” enquired the matron.

“I was only trying to persuade uncle either to come and see us, or to ask us to dine here to-day, which would answer the same end, I tell him; and our pig’s head will be as good to-morrow as to-day.”

“For shame, for shame! You may rely upon this, Betsey, you shall not come out with me again.”

“So much the better,” said Betsey, “I should like of all things to be left at home and alone; what a fire I would make up! How much more comfortable I should be than you and sister, shivering under a tree, or in a barn. Don’t you remember, cousin, and you, Mr. O’Brien, when you went with us to hear Mr. Cantwell preach? He never warms me; do you think he would you, uncle?”

“No, truly, child; I think you have more sense than your mother.”

Montague having twice experienced the benefit of Mrs. Balfour’s hospitality, hinted his wishes to his wife, who immediately hoped that lady, if not very particularly engaged, would favour them with her company to dinner.

Mrs.

Mrs. Balfour looked rather confused. She paused; and then, in consideration of her brother's speedy departure, accepted the polite invitation.

The merchant's colour deepened, and even Henry felt the glow of shame tinge his cheeks. But Betsey began to caper about, crying, "You shall not stint me to-day, mama, as you do at home."

"When do I ever do that?" asked the still angry matron.

"Why, are not you and Dr. Cantwell always preaching up how wrong it is to eat much, mama? and don't you make me drink cold milk and water instead of tea, and toast and water instead of ale, or cough cordial? An't that stinting me, uncle?"

"Truly I think so, child," he replied.

Excessively provoked, Mrs. Balfour said she must depart, else they should not

get near the preacher. I presume it would be a mere compliment to ask your Ladyship, or any of you, gentlemen, to accompany me?"

Her Ladyship, the Earl, the Colonel, and Montague bowed an affirmative; and the merchant declared, while there was a Church within twenty miles, he would never enter a Methodist meeting.

"Dr. Cantwell appears to be a great favourite with the ladies," said Henry. "You brought four with you this morning, aunt."

"I wonder how you can contrive to stow so many people in your *pass-cart*!" said the merchant.

"Goodness, uncle, we had not near our full complement, as mama calls it; this morning we should have been nine, if Miss Wilson had not run away with her papa's footman; for she was to have come to our house last night."

"My dear Betsey, I request you would not mention that misguided girl in my hearing."

hearing. I never was more shocked than when I learned her imprudence, for I never was more deceived in my judgment of any body."

"What, I suppose you had made a convert of the girl; and the devil, in the shape of a smart young footman, thwarted all you had been doing," said the merchant.

"Surely, brother, you forget it is Sunday. 'Tis a most dreadful affair altogether, though you treat it with such levity. This deluded girl has unfortunately a very large fortune, independent of her father, who wished to have married her to our excellent friend, Dr. Cantwell."

"Oh, Oh, such was the plot! it was well contrived, no doubt. I commend the girl for her spirit; a chimney-sweeper would have been preferable to such a canting, whining hypocrite."

"Oh, brother, you are much too worldly; but I can't stay to expatiate upon Miss Wilson's folly; the poor Captain is almost broken-hearted."

"What, I suppose he was to have gone snacks with old Cantwell."

"You are quite prejudiced, Mr. Melcombe; therefore I shan't pretend to argue with you.—Lady Albury—my Lord, I wish you a very good morning. Mr. O'Brien, your most obedient. Brother, you shall have my prayers; nor will I forget you, nephew."

"Five o'clock is our dinner hour, Ma'am," said Lady Albury.

"Now as you always dine at one, sister, eat your pig's head at that hour, for fear, notwithstanding Dr. Cantwell's eloquence, you should be faint before five."

Mrs. Balfour could laugh at this kind hint, as she termed it; but was so angry with Betsey, who had become answerable for their returning in due time, that she scolded all the way to the chapel.

The females she had brought from High Clere, were rather chagrined when they found

found their conductress did not intend to dine with them; but dared not complain, though no offer was made them of the pig's head, and they foresaw bread and cheese would be all dame Wildham's larder afforded.

The matron had another far more serious difficulty to obviate, except she chose to keep Lady Albury waiting, which was very far from her intention. The afternoon service at the tabernacle she frequented, never began before four; by which time the preacher, who usually dined on a Sunday with some of the richest of his followers, was in excellent spirits, and fully inspired. She therefore mentioned the invitation she had received to the self-created Reverend, hinting she had hopes she should be able to raise an ample collection for their intended chapel, from this rich family, if not induce Mr. O'Brien to still farther patronize the good Doctor.

Cantwell was all compliance where he hoped there was any thing to be gained, and informed his auditors that the afternoon service would commence an hour sooner than usual, owing to his having to attend a sick brother in the evening. No one objected, and thus it was settled; while the party she was so anxious to join, from the moment of their return from Church, had been amusing themselves at her expense.

The merchant protested he would not have let her off so easily, had they met at High Clere; though all he said was of no avail, and he foresaw he should be obliged soon to take out a statute of lunacy against her, or she would marry Cantwell, to console him for his recent disappointment, and endow him with the small remains of her once decent fortune.

Before the clock struck five, she and her daughters made their appearance. Betsey ran

ran in first, calling out, "Here we are, uncle; I hope we are in time." Being answered in the affirmative, she declared she was very hungry.

Mrs. Balfour was paying her compliments to the mistress of the house. Betsey thereupon needed to tell her uncle, in a lower tone, that Dr. Cantwell had been rather indisposed, so that they might keep their appoint-

Mr. Melcombe silenced her by his looks; but a quarter of an hour elapsing before the party were summoned to dinner, she began again.—"Dear me, how lazy this cook must be! I heard the clock strike soon after we came in; I am sure, if she was mine, I would turn her away."

The company laughed, and her uncle asked whether his advice had been followed respecting the pig's head.

“ It has not been unpacked I will promise you, uncle ; 'tis to serve us to-morrow, else I was so hungry, I believe I could have eat a good hunch of it, little as I love it ; but mama said it would have been a sin to eat any thing, when we were to have such a nice dinner ; and she would not spoil her own appetite, nor allow me to told me, to spoil mine.”

“ I forgot, my love, you would be hungry,” said the matron, “ when I gave dinner to dame Wildham ; and I did not like to ask for any of it again,”

Betsey shook her head at her uncle, and gave various other signs of her incredulity ; but was prevented replying by the appearance of the butler, who brought the welcome information that dinner was upon the table ;—she therefore skipped away, and was seated before the rest of the party entered the eating parlour.

Mrs.

Mrs. Balfour had convinced Lord Fitzarran and Colonel O'Hallaran that she used religion as a mere cloak, to conceal a very depraved heart and mind. The young people were convinced she privately and frequently sacrificed to Bacchus, and they rather joined as well as the two former, to expose her probable hypocrisy. The merchant secretly held a similar plan, having been disappointed at her allusion in the morning to her love of money; he therefore, when Lord Fitzarran advised her drinking half a glass of brandy, after eating very heartily of some excellent salmon, seconded him so earnestly, that she readily acceded to their joint wishes; and as each gentleman asked her to drink a glass of wine with them, and she had also made free with some pretty strong, though very pleasant ale, before the cloth was removed, she was three parts tipsy.

Lady Albury therefore began to guess their design; and though she despised her

visiter as cordially as any one present, she was very unwilling they should succeed to the extent of their wishes. Her intelligent eyes conveyed the intimation to Montague, who, with Henry, receded from the league : but the mischief was nearly completed.

She entered into a religious discourse with the Earl, and retorted upon the merchant, growing absolutely unintelligible, and being frequently helped herself to wine, the gentlemen having ceased to press her to drink glass for glass, Henry asked her what time she had ordered her *carriage* ?

“ At half past seven,” the eldest girl replied ; and as it was now past eight, upon enquiry it was found that the other four females and the cart had been in waiting near an hour. She therefore rose to depart, nor did Lady Albury press her to prolong her visit ; and it was not without some difficulty that the merchant and Henry placed her in her vehicle.

The

The *coachman* had been regailing himself in the servant's hall, and was even more tipsy than his almost speechless mistress; they therefore declared, when they returned to the parlour, they thought they would be in high luck if they reached home without accidents.

Lady Albury blamed them all, and was very sorry she had not sent the good lady home in her chaise. The merchant protested, had not her Ladyship been present, he would have carried the joke much farther; assuring her he did not consider the old hypocrite in any great danger, as the miserable beast knew the road, and would undoubtedly only go a foot's pace; and by his advice, one of the female friends had taken the reins: therefore, if neither the man nor she fell under the wheels, no harm could befall them.—And as her Ladyship thought Mrs. Balfour ran but very little risk of meeting with such a misfortune, she extended the olive-branch, agreeing that she
almost

almost deserved to be frightened into her senses.

The merchant only wished she might be sensible how much she had exposed herself, as it might prevent her again hazarding her neck, by giving way to such an odious vice.

The Earl pitied the children, and Lady Albury resolved to visit High Clere in the course of the week, in hopes shame might work a reformation in the old bigot's principles.

CHAP. VIII.

THE following morning the merchant took a reluctant leave of Southampton, and Colonel O'Hallaran sailed for the Isle of Wight.

Lord Fitzarran sent orders to his household to have every thing in readiness for the reception of his grandson and daughter the following week; they having promised to accompany him thither as soon as young Egerton came to his brother's release.

Little of moment occurred till the Thursday, when Lord Fitzarran and Henry Melcombe went to Portsmouth, where they intended

intended staying one night. His Lordship had an old acquaintance there, whom he wished to visit, and requested Henry to bear him company during his jaunt. Montague and his wife therefore breakfasted *tête-à-tête* on the Friday; and her Ladyship was proposing to give their grandfather the meeting at Botley's, when their letters were brought in. Numerous were the congratulatory epistles of her Ladyship's acquaintance; and as neither Lord Altamont, his daughters, nor the Counsellor ever let an opportunity pass of addressing their dear *Montague*, he was also favoured with several epistles.

Having run over the mere routine of compliments addressed to each, they laughed at some of their correspondents, and ridiculed others. Her Ladyship, smiling archly in his face, asked Montague where he slept the first night he left London, on his road to Southampton.

So

So unexpected a question, and which he was so very unprepared to answer, heightened his usual colour; his *incognita* came across him—he paused.

“Nay, I did not mean to disconcert you so cruelly,” continued her Ladyship, patting his glowing cheek. “I had a reason for being thus inquisitive.”

“I think I wrote you word that I slept at Winchester,” equivocally replied the confused Montague.

“Very possibly; but why was you so averse to letting me know you had passed the preceding evening in very agreeable company at Turnham Green?”

O'Brien's sensations were far from enviable; he felt he deserved the severest reproaches—felt his conduct admitted of no extenuation, and presumed, as he had once before thought, this lady resided in or near Devizes, and that her *confidential* servants had blazoned her dishonour, and his infidelity,

lity, in her neighbourhood. A moment sufficed to form his determination.

“ I plead guilty, my beloved Miranda, nor shall I attempt to defend what my own heart disapproves. Listen to my short tale, only remembering, to “ err is mortal—to forgive divine.”

Her Ladyship laughed, and taking his hand, said, “ Can you suppose I should have mentioned your little *egarement de l'esprit*, had I thought you would have taken it in so serious a manner? I won't listen to your confession, and here pronounce your absolution. I am convinced I possess your heart; I never was a monopolist, and my kind anonymous correspondent could not have addressed a person less likely to pay any attention to her or his incendiary attempts.”

“ You are too generous, much too forgiving, my beloved Miranda,” replied the self-condemned O'Brien; “ but you must hear

hear my story," briefly stating where he had first met the fair *incognita*, and the manner in which she joined him in the evening."

"Your conduct was perfectly natural," said her Ladyship, interrupting him, "nor can I wonder at your having turned this *incognita's* brain. Have you neither seen nor heard from her since?—Love, not jealousy, prompts the question."

"Upon my honour, which I never knowingly forfeited, I have neither seen nor heard from her since she left me at Turnham Green; nor have I the most distant idea who or what she is. As I told her at the time, I thought I had seen her before, but where or when had totally escaped my memory."

"Poor woman!—you will induce me to pity her; Love certainly renders his votaries as blind as himself. I acquitted you before I heard your story; but since we are upon the subject, has not the *belle* of Southampton banished the *incognita* from your thoughts?"

"The

“ The *belle* of Southampton, my love ? You are now unintelligible ; I protest I have not seen a woman since my arrival here, deserving of the name.”

“ Are you serious that you certainly never risked your neck for a homely woman ? and you must think you did that when you attempted to scale the poor Apothecary’s garden-wall.”

“ Ridiculous !” cried the now laughing Montague ; “ though I acknowledge having knocked down the wall you allude to, bruised my knees, received a smart stroke of a horse-whip across my shoulders, merely for being too curious.” He then related his adventure, and gave her Ladyship his real reasons for breaking in upon Henry and the lady, and for endeavouring to escape her husband’s notice.

She laughed very heartily, and thought he almost deserved what had befallen him, for giving way to the curiosity of his disposition.

“ But here,” said she, taking out her pocket-

pocket-book, "is the first letter I received from your kind friend, my anonymous correspondent."

He looked first at the post-mark ; it was London, and dated, he found, the very day following his nocturnal adventure. The writing appeared to be a gentleman's, who began by apologizing for the liberty he was taking, hinting, he had once been her Ladyship's admirer, but too great diffidence had prevented him from disclosing his sentiments ; nevertheless, he should always continue her friend, and as such, was sorry to inform her that she had bestowed her hand and fortune upon a dissipated young rake, whose heart had long been in the possession of another woman ;—giving an account of O'Brien's meeting, perhaps accidentally, a most elegant female in the park, and again by special appointment in the evening, with whom he had gone to Turnham Green, where the guilty couple had slept, referring her to his servants for the truth of what he advanced,

advanced, who had received orders to follow him to the Three Pigeons at Brentford; and concluded by assuring her, that though this scandalous amour was at present kept a secret, her husband would very soon throw off the mask, and retire with his enamourata to France or Italy. The writer knew her to be a woman of immense fortune, of the first rank in Europe, and had heard her say, had she an empire at her own disposal, she would lay it at the feet of the handsome O'Brien, and only request his love in return. Her Ladyship might therefore make what use she chose of this intelligence, which, the writer assured her, proceeded from a most disinterested friend, who would ever act as her guardian angel.

O'Brien read this *friendly epistle* in silence; then vowed he would give a thousand pounds to discover its author, and asked her Ladyship what steps she had taken in consequence of having received it?

“ Could

" Could I, with any hopes of success, have traced where it came from, I believe, like you, Montague, I should have been tempted to offer a tolerable bribe to learn to whom we were both so much obliged; but as I am convinced it is the production of some secret enemy of your's, and of course of mine, who kindly wished to make us miserable, I thought it beneath my notice; though I believed it very possible there might be a little truth intermixed with a great deal of falsehood. But this morning I received a second favour from this very said Sylph, or angel, as he styles himself, which accuses you of intriguing with the *belle* of Southampton, adducing your falling over the wall as a full proof of the justice of these accusations. Here it is."

" I must discover this vile incendiary," exclaimed Montague, as he took the letter.

" This last accusation is absolutely malice propense; I could much sooner have forgiven their first kind attempt to lower me

in

in your esteem, because I deserved to suffer for my unpardonable folly."

It was written in the same hand, and evidently with a design to render her Ladyship jealous, and of course miserable. Neither O'Brien nor she could divine to whom they were thus obliged; but both vowed no such paltry attempts should have the desired end. Her Ladyship would then have thrown both epistles into the fire; but Montague prevented her, observing, they might perhaps, at some future time, lead to a discovery of their author, whose wishes to disturb their domestic felicity were thus rendered abortive; and the happy couple set out to meet the Earl and Henry in higher spirits, and perhaps more sincerely attached to each other, than they had ever been before.

Lord Fitzarran looked and felt highly gratified by their kind attention; and on their return, they found William Egerton, who was just arrived to take his brother's place.

place. He had of course heard of the recent discovery respecting Montague, with whom he had hitherto never been upon an intimate footing. Now, however, in conformity to the instructions he had received, he approached with a respect bordering upon obsequiousness, which rather hurt than flattered his truly generous brother, who gave him a most fraternal reception, promising to introduce him to the superior Officers that evening, and to the others the following morning, upon the parade, when he should enter upon his new duty.

Colonel Danby received him with distinguished politeness; trusted he would, like his brother, prove an honour to their corps; and the next day, with all due military form and etiquette, presented him to the regiment, as the successor of the future Lord Delmont, who now took a public leave of the corps, to the general regret of

his men, and resigned his command to Lieutenant Egerton.

Upon their return home, Henry, who had been present during the ceremony, observed, "he must pay his farewell visit to High Clere, as the Sunday was devoted to giving a farewell dinner to Montague's late brother Officers (nor were the soldiers to be forgotten); and on the Monday he was to accompany his kind hosts to the Isle of Wight."

"I protest I have a vast mind to be of the party," said Lady Albury. "What say you, O'Brien? Will you drive me to High Clere this morning?"

He was perfectly agreeable;—and air and exercise having been recommended to the Earl by his physicians, he was easily persuaded to accompany Henry in his grandson's postchaise.

Lefs

Less than an hour brought them to the white house. Betsey, who was amusing herself in the front court with a skipping-rope, was overjoyed to see them.

"Is your Mama at home?" asked Henry, as he alighted.

"Yes, yes, cousin. Pray come in, my Lord. How glad I am to see you, my Lady, and you too, Mr. O'Brien! My stars, what a nice carriage! But come along," seizing her Ladyship's hand, and leading her into the house, and then down a long passage, at the end of which she threw open a door, calling out, "Here, Mama, here is Lady Albury, and my Lord, I forget his name; and cousin Harry, and Mr. O'Brien, all come to see us. Are any of the tarts ready? You know her Ladyship gave us some monstrous nice ones when we dined there."

The bare recollection of the situation in which she had left her Ladyship's villa,

would have been sufficient to have confounded Mrs. Balfour; in addition to which, she was fairly up to her elbows in flour and pastry, and quite *en deshabille*. The maid was taking the fire out of the oven, and the eldest girl was paring and slicing potatoes into a large dish, which appeared to contain beef-steaks. An apple-pie stood near, and several tart-pans, containing something green, that resembled celery, but, upon Henry's making the enquiry, the company learned it was rhubarb, which far excelled codlins in point of flavour, according to Mrs. Balfour's account.

“ I don't know how it might taste if Mama was to put plenty of sugar,” said Betsey; “ but as she never does that, I don't at all like rhubarb tarts.”

“ But how came you, my innocent child, to think of shewing this honourable company into the kitchen? Conduct them into the drawing-room I entreat.”

“ By Jafus,” cried the Peer, “ I have often been my own cook, my good Lady, so do let us derange you.”

“ Why your Lordship must know I only heat my oven on a Saturday, and then I generally make two meat, several fruit pies or tarts, and a rice pudding ; and thus you see, my Lady, I nearly cook as much on one day as serves us the whole week, for all these sort of things warm again with very little trouble or expence. I make my pie-crust with potatoes, which are particularly nice and crisp, even when stale.”

“ Potatoes seem to be a very favourite root of your’s, aunt.”

“ They are certainly very wholesome and very cheap, two great recommendations, nephew.”

Perfectly satisfied, however, with the specimen they had had of Mrs. Balfour’s culinary talents, neither her Ladyship nor the gentlemen objected to adjourning into the drawing-room, where she promised to join

them in the course of a few minutes, when she produced a bottle of her celebrated cordial, which her company pronounced excellent.

Betsey, who could not remain long silent, addressing Henry, said, " You don't know, cousin, what an uncomfortable ride home we had on Sunday ! There Mama fell asleep, and tumbled off her stool ; and John Jefferies tumbled ever so many times all his length in the mud ; and we should certainly have been overturned, if Mrs. Bell and Mrs. Paps had not led the horse every step of the way."

Lady Albury had hitherto avoided mentioning Sunday ; but was now obliged to apologize for her want of thought, and to express her joy that they had reached home without any accident.

" Why carts are certainly dangerous conveyances," said the confused Mrs. Balfour,

" after

“ after dark ; and John Jefferies had made rather too free with Mr. O'Brien's ale.”

Henry hoped she had read him a lecture upon the heinous sin of drunkenness, and gave her some other very severe cuts.

She saw them with pleasure rise to depart, relinquishing all hopes of forming any permanent friendship with such a dissipated, worldly set ; observing to Dr. Cantwell, “ A camel would sooner pass through the eye of a needle, than such folks attain the kingdom of Heaven.”

CHAP. IX.

ON the Sunday, all the Officers belonging to the 22d, then with the regiment, dined with O'Brien; and roast beef and plum-puddings were ordered at the various houses where the soldiers were quartered, who drank the noble Lieutenant's health with three-times-three, and swore he was one of the most spirited men in the whole corps; and the next morning the Earl, Lady Albury, the future Peer, and Henry, embarked for the Isle of Wight. Colonel O'Hallaran met them upon their landing, and joined with the Earl, who was all life and

and spirits, in doing the honours of his little villa.

A week soon slipped away in a continued round of pleasure, when Montague received a letter from Lord St. Osyth, requesting to see him in London on the following Tuesday, as his accession to the Delmont title, and his promotion to the rank of a Captain in the Guards, would be in that night's Gazette; he therefore wished to present him to his Sovereign the following day at the levee. He had sent necessary directions to his tailor, respecting regimentals, &c. and every proper order concerning equipages, &c; and should have insisted upon him and his wife's taking up their abode with him at Whitehall, if Lord Fitzarran had not informed him that he should expect they would for the present become his guests; concluding with congratulatory compliments to that Nobleman, who, he presumed, would accompany them to London.

Montague's blushing honours came so quick upon him, that he began to have his doubts whether they would sit easy upon his shoulders. Lady Albury felt infinitely more gratified by his rising greatness than he did himself; though Montague had some pride, and no very small share of vanity: and all his relations and most intimate friends, nay, even acquaintance, were doing all in their power to increase both.

Lord Fitzarran was transported when he learned the contents of Lord St. Ofyth's letter. He had told his Lordship that his grandson and daughter must, nay should be his guests; and a town-house, which had devolved to him with his title and estates, was preparing for their reception.

Compton, his English steward, had waited upon him since his return to the Isle of Wight, and had preceded them to town, to execute

execute various orders the Peer had omitted giving before.

Lord Fitzarran was certainly, as he often said himself, a very original character; under a blunt frankness, far more likely to create him enemies than friends, he concealed a most feeling heart. He had adored his wife, was conscious he had shamefully neglected his daughter, but now idolized his grandson, and could scarcely be said to exist out of his presence, for he was convinced he should not survive his loss four-and-twenty hours; yet would he have sooner followed him to the grave, than have known he preserved his life by the slightest deviation from the paths of honour. And in this respect there was a similarity in their dispositions, which had greatly increased their mutual attachment; for Montague could appreciate and venerate his grandfather's virtues, whose chief study was to promote the felicity of all around him, which he affirmed was the only way to increase his

own;—and no man ever succeeded better, or was more generally or more deservedly respected and beloved by his friends, dependants, or even the lowest menials of his household; for all he had a kind word, to all he lent an attentive ear, and a tale of distress ever interested his feelings, and drew forth his purse for the relief of the sufferers.

His having so easily succeeded in establishing his grandson's claims, as Colonel O'Hallaran had foreseen, greatly contributed to the amendment of his health; his strength increased, and he protested he grew younger every day, and did not despair of becoming, in time, a less hideous figure, and less likely to frighten his great-grandchildren, with whom he now began to hope he should be surrounded before he died.

It was agreed they should leave the little island on the Saturday, spend the
Sunday

Sunday at Southampton, sleep at Winchester on the Monday, and reach Park-Lane, where the Earl's house stood, by a fashionable dinner hour on the Tuesday.

Lord St. Osyth was requested to give them the meeting there; and as their plans suffered no interruption, they drove into Hyde Park soon after five on the appointed day.

The mansion to which they were going, stood by itself, enclosed within a large court and excellent garden, and had a very noble appearance, Lady Albury remarked as she alighted. The Earl hoped the inside would equally answer her expectations.

Lord St. Osyth met them in the hall, and after the first compliments, declared he had spent near half an hour admiring the magnificent suite of apartments upon the first floor, which were fitted up with a degree

degree of elegance and taste he had never yet seen equalled."

"Let us hear my grand-daughter's opinion," cried Lord Fitzarran, leading the way, after enquiring whether Compton was in waiting. He was answered in the affirmative.—"That's well," he replied. "Now come along, my dear children, and let us see whether the upholsterers deserve Lord St. Olyth's encomiums."

A more superb suite of rooms had perhaps never been seen; every luxury that could be introduced, consistent with the general elegance which pervaded the whole, was displayed; nor had the almost magic power of riches been ever more truly exemplified, than in the decorations of this princely abode.

Her Ladyship was warm in her praise of every surrounding object, and complimented the Earl upon the very superior taste the orders she presumed he had given, evinced.

"By

“ By Jafus, my dear girl, I deserve no praise ; even the money bestowed upon these baubles you are pleased to approve, was neither of my saving nor my getting. I ordered the first upholsterer in London to make a few necessary alterations in my family mansion, such as removing the furniture out of these apartments into those appropriated for the domestics ; and I am inclined to think he understands his trade. But now let us adjourn into the library, which I gave more particular orders about, fearful the good man should sob me off with wooden books.”

They followed him down stairs ; and in the library, which was fitted up with correspondent taste and luxury, they found Mr. Compton standing near a table, literally covered with parchment. His Lordship took up the sheet nearest his hand, saying, “ They all lay in due form and order, I presume,” glancing his eyes over the preamble ; then turning to O’Brien, said,
“ Since

“ Since her Ladyship is perfectly satisfied with the specimen she has had of my upholsterer’s skill, I must request you will accept this house as it now stands; and may you live to see your great great-grandchildren, before you resign it to your heir! I have merely taken the liberty of ordering the dinner to-day; but mind, henceforth I am your guest. Compton has not been sparing of parchment, as I told him when I executed these deeds in the Isle of Wight; but if this one does but secure you the undisputed possession of *Delmont House*, for so I wish this to be in future named, we will forgive him for crowding it with unnecessary words. Tautology is necessary in law.”

“ I know I must not say, nay, my generous grandfather,” said the truly grateful Monague; “ though I do not at all approve of your depriving yourself of this magnificent mansion upon my account.”

“ Spare your breath, my boy; I make you this present from very interested motives;
you.

you are to keep house in future ;—but, not to be too encroaching, I have settled a trifle upon you, by way of paying for my board here, and at Lenham ; for except you or Lady Albury turn me out, I shall never trudge.”

“ A trifle, my dear grandfather !” exclaimed Montague, who had been looking over the deeds which Compton, in obedience to a sign from the Earl, had presented him with, “ the whole of your English estates you denominate a trifle ! I am already as rich as I ever desire to be, thanks to my wife’s generosity ; I therefore must request you will allow me to decline accepting so large an addition to my present noble income.”

“ You positively shall relieve me from part of my cares, boy ; why, I shall never be able to spend the fifteen thousand a year I still hold in dear little Ireland. Besides, do you suppose I should, had I known you were in being, have suffered my heir to have married without securing him a proper establishment ?

establishment? And as I mean to live at your expence, I should like to know what you will gain; as Lord Altamont said, I am greatly in arrears, and am only fulfilling my duty. My daughter's son has a right to share my fortune, so God in Heaven bless you! and as I said before, may you live, as I hope to do, to see your great-great-grandchildren!"

"I can hardly fancy myself awake," cried the grateful youth, approaching a large pier glass. "Can this be the same poor Lieutenant who arrived six months ago at Devizes upon his ten toes, for excellent reasons, and who might have carried his whole wardrobe in a knapsack slung over his shoulder, without finding his progress impeded by its weight; 'tis absolutely incredible!"

"'Tis really strange," observed the delighted Peer, approaching the same glass, and resting his arm upon his grandson's shoulder. After eyeing himself for a few seconds, "By Jafus, my dear boy, I
am

am as little inclined to believe this old tawny, yellow, sickly, frightful looking figure that stands beside you, was once the most undaunted Irish lad that ever stood six feet without his shoes, and who could have leaped over the moon, do you see, for the metal he had in his pockets to keep him down. The devil burn me if it is not very mortifying! What signifies my being one of the first Peers in Hibernia? Oh, if it was not for you, my handsome lad, who remind me so much of what I was, I believe I should pistol myself, out of pure vexation. "But out of evil comes good," says the old proverb; and if those villanous White Boys had not made way for my accession, the Fitzarran title would never have fallen to the share of the finest fellow in all Europe. I hope I shall be allowed to look down upon, and glory in you, my dear boy, after I have joined my poor dear Fanny and our daughter, till we are all united never to part again, when you come to tell us how matters have gone on below in this good-for-

for-nothing world, where men are only valued according to their money."

"That is very true, my dear Sir; you and I have experienced the efficacy of riches, and you mean I should feel the *embarras* of wealth; however, let us hope you will live many years, to assist me to spend what I owe to your generosity."

"Why, I do mean to request Death would spare me a little longer, for life was never more dear to me," said the Peer, who felt his strength recruited, and his spirits renovated, while he exultingly surveyed the truly athletic figure, and fine formed features of his much-loved grandson.

Lady Albury expressed her real sense of the Earl's generosity in the most chosen terms. Reasons which she never had, nor ever meant to disclose, had induced her to offer her hand and fortune to Lieutenant O'Brien, though few women were more sensible of the disadvantages he then laboured under.

under. She was therefore very much gratified by the late discovery, and almost wished the world could have supposed her privy to the secret of his birth; as she was sensible many people had condemned, and few had given her credit for her apparent disinterestedness, in selecting Counsellor Egerton's natural son for her partner through life; though had it been to do again, she would have chosen him in preference to the heir to the first British Dukedom, so much had her love increased since their marriage. She therefore gloried in her husband's being thus rendered so much his narrow-minded, unprincipled father's superior.

Nor was Henry Melcombe less rejoiced that his favourite friend was thus made completely independent.

"I shall not attempt to compliment you, my friend," said Lord St. Osyth, addressing the Earl, "because I know you detest the language of adulation; but you must allow me

me to say you have nobly evinced the generous love you bear your grandson. My humble offering is as a mere drop of water in the ocean, compared to your magnificent donations," presenting Montague with a Captain's commission in the first regiment of Guards, assuring him he hoped to see him upon the Staff before he was forty.

Montague's thanks were polite and impressive, but were interrupted by a summons to dinner, which Lord Fitzarran said was his farewell treat, previous to his breaking up house-keeping.

The repast was, like the mansion, magnificent; and a very costly sideboard of plate, decorated with the Fitzarran arms, and Delmont coronet, was a fresh proof of the Earl's magnificence. The dessert was being brought in, when Lord Altamont, with a gazette in his hand, containing his grandson's promotion, entered the room, determined,

mined, he said, to be the first to address his beloved Montague by his new title.

Lord and Lady Delmont's health were immediately drank in full bumpers of Madeira.

Lord St. Ofyth took an early opportunity of informing the newly-arrived Peer that he was his grandson's guest, whose income was also nearly doubled since his arrival in town, owing to Lord Fitzarran's unbounded munificence.

These happy tidings drew forth fresh congratulations; he only wished he could have followed the dictates of his own heart upon the joyful occasion. His professions excited general risibility; but understanding that Lord Delmont intended to go to St. James's on the morrow, he entreated he might be of the party. He knew Lord St. Ofyth had a prior and a greater claim to the honour of introducing the young Peer to his

his Majesty; still he should wish to be present upon the occasion.

“That is certainly at your own option,” said the diverted Lord Fitzarran.

“Your Lordship means to go, I presume,” he replied; “you have not kissed hands, I believe, since your accession to your present title.”

“I have been honoured with a private audience, my good friend; and when I am less likely to disgrace so brilliant a circle, I will publicly pay my devoirs to our beloved Monarch, in whose service I would even now spill the last drop of my blood. But my fighting days are over; my past endeavours have been amply recompensed; and the recent proof I have received of his Majesty’s gracious remembrance of my attempts to support the honour of the British arms, has rendered me the most grateful of his subjects; so here goes his health in half pint bumpers. We will
excuse

excuse your Ladyship from joining in our toast."

The King was therefore drank with three-times-three, and the party adjourned into the saloon.

Lord Altamont took his leave soon after tea, promising to be in Park Lane by twelve the following morning, as he was resolved to be in his grandson's suite when he went to St. James's.

Henry Melcombe also took leave of the happy party, after receiving a general and a most cordial invitation to frequently repeat his visits at Delmont House.

CHAP. X.

NEITHER his recent honours, nor his still more recent acquisitions, prevented Montague from enjoying a profound repose. He rose rather before his usual time; and having breakfasted, and chatted away an hour with his wife and grandfather, was surveying himself with no small degree of pleasure, arrayed in the most distinguished regimentals in Great Britain, when he was informed that the Earl and Countess of Altamont, Lady Caroline, and Lady Almeria Egerton were in the drawing-room.

The

The Earl had introduced his female relatives to Lady Delmont and Lord Fitzarran before the newly created Peer joined them. Having allowed them full time to express their joy and approbation of every thing around them, Lord Altamont enquired whether his grandson had seen, or heard any thing of his father since his arrival?

“He had not; he meant to call in Lincoln’s Inn Fields when he left St. James’s.”

“You may, but I never can forgive his past conduct towards you, my dear Delmont. Those of my particular friends, to whom I have been obliged to be very unreserved, declare his duplicity admits of no extenuation. He has betrayed so great a want of principle, I much doubt his obtaining any further promotion.”

“I trust he will not always meet with such a prejudiced judge,” said the offended youth. “I alone have been injured by the weakness of his conduct, and the instability

of his principles, which neither permitted him to act uniformly right or uniformly wrong. The hopes of securing a title for her son induced his present wife to give him her hand; and every succeeding day rendered it more difficult to undeceive her, and consequently to do me justice. As his natural son, he shewed me favour; and perhaps he had been far more generous, but for his fears of exciting suspicions of the truth;—had he but done justice to my mother's memory, I would have stood forth his champion in the face of the world, though he had brought me up as the bastard son of one of his clerks."

"Nobly said, my brave boy!" cried the enraptured Irishman; "your father has been more weak than absolutely criminal."

At that moment a servant informed Lord Delmont that Mr. Egerton was in the library, and wished to see him.

"The

"The sight of my carriage prevented him from wishing to be shewn up stairs," said the unfeeling Lord Altamont.

"Let my father know I will attend him immediately," said Montague.

The servant left the room, and he was preparing to follow.

"If your dutiful behaviour does not put him to the blush," the callous Peer proceeded, "he must be absolutely case-hardened. Don't let him detain you long, I request."

Montague left the room without making any reply. He had seldom or ever been more provoked; never before had he so thoroughly despised his grandfather. That his father should have imbibed many of the Earl's erroneous principles, he thought by no means extraordinary. Though ever anxious publicly to defend his fame and character, he felt he had never acted the

part of a father towards him, and could not help secretly wishing he had been the son of any other more respectable man. Such were his reflections, as he slowly descended the superb carpeted staircase of his newly acquired mansion. In the hall stood several of his own men in earnest conversation with Lord Altamont's and his father's servants. He caught a few disjointed words of their conversation; they were condemning the Counsellor, and applauding his dutiful behaviour. Never did he feel more humbled. He hastened forward. They ceased their comments, and respectfully made way for him to pass. He felt his cheeks glow as he opened the library door. The act of duty he was about to perform became painful. His conduct might be deemed abject; the reflection did not quicken his pace; but the Counsellor met him with a smile, welcomed him to London, congratulated him, without *blushing*, upon his recent promotions, and complimented him upon his personal appearance; then carelessly advancing towards

towards the window, said, "Is not that my father's carriage?"

Montague, who had expected to find him confused and embarrassed, was petrified at his unconcerned behaviour; but the Counsellor, without waiting for an answer to his question, said—

"Lord Altamont chuses to feel himself highly offended because I did not entrust him with the secret of your birth; now so long as you are convinced I meant to do you justice, what can it concern him? I suppose he wishes to pay his court to you at my expence; but I have formed a very wrong judgment of your principles, should he succeed."

"I should despise myself, Sir, if I could not with truth declare that I do not wish, even in thought, to revert to the past."

The Counsellor's assumed confidence no longer enabled him to meet the eyes of his much-injured son. A stifled

sigh preceded—"You are too generous, Delmont; I wish I could as readily forget the never to be recalled past!"—Starting as if conscience stricken, he put his hand to his forehead, remained silent for several minutes, then exclaimed, "Would I had never deviated from the paths of virtue!—but repentance comes too late; 'tis now useless!" stamping his foot, and clenching his fist. "I have been wrong from the first. I—but z——ds!" He paused, then continued more gently, and with a calmer aspect, "Is the Earl of Fitzarran at home? I know he despises me, and I am conscious I deserve his contempt. I certainly loved his daughter to distraction!—and a son of her's—Oh, what have I done!"

"Lord Fitzarran, Sir, like myself, wishes to bury the past in oblivion," interrupted Lord Delmont, who now felt a degree of pity for this apparent penitent.

"Impossible!" he cried; "in vain do I attempt to brave the censure of the world; I read my condemnation in the countenances

rances of all my friends. Is not my fame for ever blasted, my reputation sullied, all hopes of rising in my profession vanished?"

"Surely, my dear father," said the truly softened son, "you see this matter in too serious a light. Admitting you may have erred, while we continue friends, as I said once before, who has a right to arraign your conduct? I have ever attributed the little deceit you permitted yourself, to the love you bore the present Mrs. Egerton, who would most probably not have given you her hand, had she known of your former engagements."

"You are very kind, Montague; Lord St. Osyth and yourself have very considerately admitted of the only defence I must acknowledge my conduct towards Lord Fitzarran's daughter permitted me to make. My son Charles bears the downfall of his expectations with heroic fortitude; he even wishes to see you."

"I do not exactly understand you, my dear Sir," replied Montague; "there is a

bare possibility, should my uncle Lord Innham——”

The Counsellor's eyes flashed fire, while he sternly enquired, “What of him, boy?”

Amazement for a moment prevented his son from proceeding; but soon recovering himself, “I meant to say, Sir, there is a possibility that the Altamont title and estates may, at some very distant period, fall to my share. Such, I will allow, were my brother Charles's prospects; but with respect to your own fortune, I must request you would immediately secure it to him, and my other brother and sister. I am already much richer than I desire; my grandfather having, since my arrival in town, presented me with this house, and his seat in Yorkshire. My commission in the Guards I owe to the generosity of Lord St. Osyth.”

“Indeed!” exclaimed the Counsellor; “and pray what may be the rent-roll of your Yorkshire estate?”

“Between

“ Between sixteen and seventeen thousand a year Sir.”

“ Then, as you justly observe, you are amply provided for; but pray what has the Earl reserved for himself?”

“ The produce of his Irish estates, Sir.”

“ Well, I wish you health and long life to enjoy these unexpected gifts of Fortune; 'tis a pity you have so little chance of a family.”

“ Your fears are, I hope, ill founded,” said the smiling Montague.

“ Indeed!” said the Counsellor, looking him very anxiously in the face; “ Lady Delmont had no children by her late husband.”

“ Very true, Sir, yet I can assure you I have every reason to hope I shall, ere long, be a father.”

“ I am very glad to hear it,” replied the Counsellor, though his countenance was more expressive of chagrin than joy.

“ I am surely no favourite of my father’s,” thought the disconcerted Montague; “ he evidently, after all, considers me as the usurper of my brother’s rights, and is certainly sorry he was forced to do me justice.” The idea was painful in the extreme; he therefore endeavoured to banish it from his mind the moment it obtruded itself upon him.

The Counsellor rose to depart during his son’s very short reverie, saying, in a mild accent, “ When shall I see you in Lincoln’s Inn Fields, Delmont ?”

“ Some time in the course of to-morrow, Sir; I should have called upon you to-day, if I had not had the pleasure of seeing you.”

“ I shall be always happy to see you;—but how did you leave William ?”

“ In perfect health and spirits, Sir; and I make no doubt he will meet with every politeness from his brother Officers.”

“ I hope

"I hope he will; Charles will be at home in the autumn; he is very much attached to you. Well, adieu! Look in upon me whenever it is convenient; and should Mrs. Egerton forget to smile upon you, I hope you will make some allowance for the extent of her disappointment. As for myself, you must suppose I rejoice in your brilliant prospects."

"I will endeavour to do so," thought Montague, as he attended his father to his carriage, rather presuming the late discovery had not increased his domestic felicity.

Lord St. Osyth's chariot drew up almost at the moment the Counsellor drove off; he therefore waited to receive and accompany that Nobleman into the drawing-room.

Lord Altamont had been rather severely censured during his absence by both Lord Fitzarran and Lady Delmont, who assured

assured him he deeply wounded, far from gratifying, his grandson's feelings by his avowed dislike of the Counsellor.

The Irish Peer considered Mr. Egerton as far more weak than designedly criminal; alledging, in support of his assertion, that had he really wished to have deprived his eldest son of his birthright, he would have stuck to the story he had told dame O'Reilly of his having died in his infancy; instead of which, he had certainly endeavoured to bring him forward in the world: but fearful of exciting suspicions in his wife's mind, he had then left him to shift for himself. Altogether his behaviour had been so strangely inconsistent, his Lordship believed he had been at some times actuated by remorse, and at others by fears that a discovery of his duplicity would be the result of his giving way to his affection for Montague. "For, z——ds!" he continued, "he must love him. I believe I was too severe upon him when the discovery took place: however,

ever, I am now ready and willing to extend the olive-branch, and to bury the past in oblivion."

Lord Altamont, perceiving he had hitherto pursued a very wrong method, easily allowed himself to be persuaded that the less he declaimed against his son's conduct, the more he should raise himself in his grandson's esteem; and in consequence of this conviction, adroitly altered his style when Lord St. Ofyth and Montague joined the party: and the latter's coach being in readiness to convey them to St. James's, they immediately proceeded thither; Lady Altamont and her daughters taking their leave of Lady Delmont at the same time.

The young Peer met with a most gracious reception; and the praises bestowed upon his maternal grandfather, whose services as Captain, Colonel, and General O'Brien, he was assured would never be forgotten, so far gratified his reigning passion, that he
returned

returned home the staunch friend of monarchy, conscious he had attracted no small share of admiration; as truth obliges us to confess that our hero, not being totally exempted from *human frailty*, was grown not a little vain of his person, and very attentive to its decoration. The Guards regimentals set it off to infinite advantage; his commanding height, and remarkably fine form, being calculated to impress every beholder with those sentiments he felt it so flattering to inspire.

Lord St. Osyth had been perhaps more gratified than his very elegant son-in-law; and Lord Altamont fancied himself of more consequence, since he could claim a relationship to Lord and Lady Delmont, who appeared with still greater *eclat* the next day in the drawing-room, and from that moment became universally courted, generally admired, and excited both the envy and applause of the fashionable world.

A fort

A sort of general family reconciliation soon took place. Montague frequently called in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and the Counsellor seldom let two days elapse without visiting Park Lane; and by way of paying his court to Lord Fitzarran, appeared, after every succeeding interview, more and more attached to Lord Delmont. The good old man was, as he had hoped, flattered by his display of paternal affection, and never scrupled to pronounce his errors to have originated in the bad example set him by Lord Altamont.

Henry Melcombe was also a constant visiter; and the friendship which he and Montague had so unexpectedly formed at Marlborough, promised to be no less permanent than sincere. There was a very great similarity in their dispositions, though Henry was much more devoted to pleasure than the youthful Peer; still perhaps there was a greater share of pride than humility in the latter's former forbearance, having ever
scorned

scorned to complain of his scanty pittance. Henry, on the contrary, had never scrupled to draw for more than his allowance, though frequently to squander the money away in idle dissipation; but in one very essential point they both perfectly agreed, as they equally disliked drinking and gaming, and of course never indulged in either of those destructive vices.

Few young men had ever entered that modern school for dissipation, the Guards, with more *eclat* than Lord Delmont; no longer restrained by motives of economy, he soon vied with his new companions in point of elegance and expence, and became a member of several fashionable clubs; still he frequently devoted his evenings to his wife and grandfather, her Ladyship having been seriously advised not to frequent either evening parties or public diversions, the present fashionable hours being particularly inimical to ladies in her situation.

Lord

Lord St. Osyth had a very elegant villa upon Richmond Hill, where he often slept, and frequently entertained a party of his select friends. Lady Delmont liked the situation; and as the summer advanced, in compliance with her father's, husband's, and Lord Fitzarran's wishes, she spent some part of every week there, particularly those nights when Montague's duty confined him to the metropolis. He often used to laugh at what he termed his lazy life, averring he should prefer actual service to sauntering up and down the Park or St. James's Street, and spending the nights he was upon guard, in quaffing Claret and Burgundy, or rattling a dice-box in a coffee-room; sincerely hoping that should the French ever render such a step necessary, the finest, but perhaps at present the most idle, troops in Great Britain would be the first employed in their country's cause.

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

LORD FITZARRAN and Lady Delmont, having spent the preceding day and night at Richmond, returned the following morning into Park Lane, in full expectation of enjoying the company of their beloved Montague at dinner, knowing he would be relieved from his military duty at twelve o'clock; instead of which, they found a note waiting their arrival, which informed them he should not be at home before midnight, having engaged to do duty for a brother Officer, who had been very unexpectedly summoned into the country, but had promised

promised to relieve him by the hour he mentioned.

To openly repine at their disappointment, was not in either of their principles, though they both felt it very severely; still they were so conscious they enjoyed much more of this beloved object's company than they could have expected him to spend at home, that they would have thought it ungrateful even to express their vexation.

Lord St. Osyth, having been for some days rather indisposed, they had left at Richmond, expecting a select party to dine with him.

Henry Melcombe, they knew, was engaged with a party of his juvenile friends at the London Tavern, or they would have sent for him to banish their *ennui*; but as mere ceremonious or fashionable visiters were the aversion of both, they gave orders not to

to be at home, and spent the evening *tête-à-tête*.

Montague was remarkable for his punctuality whenever he fixed an hour for his return; it was therefore with no small degree of astonishment his expecting wife and grandfather heard the watchman call, "Past one o'clock, and a starlight morning!"

"What can detain Delmont?" exclaimed her Ladyship.

"His friend not having come to relieve him, I should suppose," replied the Earl.

"How very thoughtless!" she rejoined.

"You must not judge his brother Officers by his standard; punctuality to their appointments is not among their virtues, though I believe they are rather particular upon such occasions as these; I only wonder Delmont has not sent to let us know, if he foresees he shall be detained much longer; but you had better retire."

Her

Her Ladyship objected, not feeling any inclination to sleep. The Earl said no more, but continued to pace the room, listening at intervals for the welcome sound of Montague's carriage, which had gone for him, according to his orders, at half past eleven.

"If he was not in momentary expectation of being relieved, he would certainly have sent the chariot and servants home," his Lordship observed.

Lady Delmont grew alarmed, though she scarcely knew why.

"Would there be any impropriety," she asked, "in sending a servant to Whitehall?"

The Earl, well aware of the ridicule to which Montague might be exposed, were a message from his wife delivered to him in the hearing of his dissipated companions,
said

said he would write a few lines, which he accordingly did; and ringing for a servant, ordered him to send one of the footmen with it to Lord Delmont.

The man returned almost immediately to inform the Earl and his Lady that one of the footmen, who had gone with the chariot, was that moment come home, expecting to have found his Lordship already arrived.

Rather startled, the Earl desired he might be sent up; he could not conceive what all this meant. The servant soon made his appearance.

“How came you to suppose your Lord was at home?” asked his Lordship.

“Because he left the other Officers upon duty, my Lord, we were informed. Between ten and eleven a gentleman came to fetch him, we understood, but he left word he should return in a few minutes; and yet he

he was not come back at one o'clock; so I set off home, leaving the chariot and William, with orders to wait till two, and then, if I did not return, they were to suppose I had found my Lord, as I fully expected to have done."

"This is very strange," said the Earl, whose surprise and anxiety were now very visible. "Order my carriage; I will set out in search of him."

Her Ladyship insisted upon accompanying him. In a few minutes they drove from the door. It struck two when they stopped at the Horse Guards. The chariot they perceived was in waiting; but no master had made his appearance, the remaining footman informed them.

The Earl alighted, and went into the coffee-room, where the Officers upon duty were assembled, who, in answer to his enquiries, informed him that Counsellor Egerton had come in search of Lord Delmont.

between ten and eleven, and that they had left the room together, the latter promising to be back in half an hour at the latest."

The Earl hastened to impart these agreeable tidings to her Ladyship, observing, if he was with his father, he must be safe.

Still they both thought it very strange he had neither sent word home that he should sup in Lincoln's Inn Fields, nor had left any directions respecting his carriage; which his Lordship now ordered home, and they proceeded to the Counsellor's, as, notwithstanding what they had learned, they neither of them thought Montague's unusual absence, and his not having returned to the coffee-room according to promise, satisfactorily accounted for. If he had not absolutely wrote word that he should be at home by midnight, they would have been less alarmed; and as they could make allowances for Montague's youth, and knew he
was

was exposed to many temptations, and generally surrounded by a most dissipated set of thoughtless young men of fashion, fearful suspicions, very inimical to her felicity, might arise in her Ladyship's mind.

"Ten to one but he will be at home before us," said the Earl, as they drove up to the Counsellor's door; "though the family don't seem to have retired, for I perceive lights moving to and fro in several of the upper rooms."

One of the footmen knocked at the door, and was desired merely to ask whether Lord Delmont was, or had been there. In a few seconds a window was opened, and a maid servant enquired who was there?

"The Earl of Fitzarran and Lady Delmont," replied the man. "They wish to know whether Lord Delmont is, or has been here?"

"Lord have mercy upon us! not he indeed," was the reply. "Why surely—but I will come down this moment."

“What can the girl mean, my Lord?” asked the trembling Lady Delmont.

“I should be puzzled to answer your question,” replied his Lordship, endeavouring to conceal his own fears, that he might not increase the alarm of his companion.

The door was opened, and they were requested to alight.

Mrs. Egerton, who seemed by her visible agitation to participate in their fears, received them in the front parlour.

“What, has not Lord Delmont been home?” was her salutation.

“He had not when we left Park Lane,” said the Earl. “He left Whitehall, we are informed, with your husband.”

“So I rather understood Mr. Egerton; but he is really hardly sensible yet.”

“In the name of God, what has befallen him?” hastily asked the Earl. “How long has he been at home?”

“About

“About a couple of hours, my Lord.”

“Well, but where did he leave my grandson?—Now don’t go to alarm yourself,” turning to Lady Delmont, “before we know whether our dear Montague has been in any danger; so pray shew us into your husband’s room, Madam, and let us hear all about it. We must begin, as I always say, at the right end, if we wish to get to the bottom of any thing.”

“I am really afraid, my Lord, my husband is not able to enter into the details you seem to require. He had an appointment I know this evening, to meet some gentleman who resides somewhere near Whitehall, within the rules, or the verge of Court, I believe they call it. Your Lordship probably knows how far that extends, better than I can tell you.”

“By Jafus, Madam, I never lived by rule in my life, nor do I know what you mean; only tell us what has happened to your husband, or please to let him speak for himself.”

“ If your Lordship will allow me time, I will endeavour to satisfy you. Mr. Egerton went out on foot a little before ten, to go to his appointment, and was brought home in a hackney coach about midnight, covered with dirt, and I am afraid very much bruised, having been knocked down and robbed of his watch, and all the money he had about him.”

“ Well, but what did he say about my grandson?” vehemently demanded the Peer. Lady Delmont caught hold of his arm to preserve herself from falling, and trembled violently through excess of terror. “ Zounds,” he continued, catching up the light, “ do shew us to your husband !”

She did as he desired, leading the way to a room upon the first floor, where they found the Counsellor in bed, who, starting up upon their entrance, displayed his apparently swollen head, encircled by several bandages, while the Earl called out—

“ Zounds

“Zounds and blood, man! what has befallen you, and where is my grandson?”

“You quite alarm me, my Lord!—I thought I requested you would send into Park Lane, Mrs. Egerton, to know whether my son got home safe. But I have scarcely yet recovered my senses,” putting his hand to his forehead.

Lady Delmont sunk down upon the side of the bed, vainly endeavouring to give utterance to her fears.

Mrs. Egerton gave her some drops, which rather revived her; while the Peer, too much agitated even to notice what was going forward, exclaimed—

“Why the devil don’t you come to the point, man? We have neither seen nor heard of my grandson since he left the coffee-room at Whitehall in your company, between ten and eleven this night!”

“ Oh you have been there ! Pray what did his brother Officers say ? ”

“ Zounds, man ! what signifies what they said. What carried you there, and where did you leave my grandson ? That is all I want to know.”

“ Business of importance (in consequence of an order I have with difficulty procured from the Board of Green Cloth) carried me thither at such a late hour ; it being the most likely time to meet with the gentleman it concerns, who has taken shelter in the verge of Court, to avoid satisfying his creditors.”

“ Why, you would tire the patience of Job, Counsellor, with your verge of Court, Board of Green Cloth, and all your other old charters to screen rogues from justice. Only tell me where you left your eldest son, and where it is likely I shall find him ! ”

“ I called upon him, as your Lordship has heard, wishing to have a witness of the conversation I expected to have with the person I was going to visit. We crossed the way into Scotland Yard, and had nearly reached

reached the bottom of the court leading to the stairs, where it is customary to take water, when, owing to the darkness of the night, and the lamps burning very dim, I found I had passed a passage to the left, leading to the house where I meant to call. I had scarcely made the remark to my son, before some villains, who were concealed under the wall, started up, and aiming a blow at my head, laid me senseless at Montague's feet! What happened afterwards, God only knows. I have been buoying myself up with the hope that he had escaped, being so much better provided than I was, to act upon the defensive. It was midnight before I came to myself, and was discovered by the watchman upon duty, who put me into a hackney coach, which conveyed me home more dead than alive."

"And was there no watchman upon duty when you were thus attacked?" asked the Earl; "for upon my soul I do not know

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any

any thing about the yards, stairs, courts, and passages you have been talking about."

"I have given you every information in my power, my Lord, respecting my son," replied the exhausted Counsellor, sinking back upon his pillow.—Mrs. Egerton declared he was speechless when he first came home; but after being put to bed, and taking something warm, he had mentioned Lord Delmont and Park Lane, but she did not understand what he meant till their arrival and enquiries had elucidated the matter.—"I wanted to send for a surgeon," she proceeded, "but he would not permit me."

The Earl neither knew what to say, do, or think, though he endeavoured to cheer the spirits of Lady Delmont, by expressing hopes that he by no means entertained; and as it was evident the Counsellor could give them no farther information, he observed they might as well depart, as he wished to see this dark court, and the useless watchman.

watchman. They therefore took their leave, after promising to send the Counsellor word, should they be so fortunate as to trace, or find the object of their researches.

His Lordship vainly endeavoured to persuade the afflicted wife (as he began to entertain very serious alarms for the fate of his great-grandchild) to suffer him to convey her home before he returned to Whitehall; till fearing opposition might rather accelerate than retard the additional misfortune he began to dread, he suffered her to follow the bent of her inclinations; and to oblige her, though he did not foresee he could be of the least use, sent one of the footmen into New Bridge Street, to impart the melancholy news to Henry Melcombe, and to request he would join them at Whitehall. She would also have dispatched one of her father's servants express to Richmond, if the Earl had not reminded her that Lord St. Osyth was far from being well, and therefore

could not take an active part in any measures it might become necessary to pursue.

Arrived at the guard-house, his Lordship again alighted, and related the misfortune that had befallen the Counsellor, to the Officers still assembled, whom he requested to assist him with their advice how to proceed, declaring he began to dread his grandson had been made away with.

His auditors protested they never had heard of so barefaced an attempt so close to the guard-house, and upon an Officer on duty; and instantly proceeded in a body, headed by the Earl, into Scotland Yard, leaving Lady Delmont in the carriage. The guardian of the night was immediately summoned.

“Did you find a gentleman, to all appearance dead, in your walk this evening?” asked the Peer.

“Yes,

“ Yes, Sir, as I was going my round at midnight, I heard somebody moan in a very lonely corner, which I can shew you; and upon drawing near, I perceived a man lying upon the ground, covered with dirt, and groaning most dreadfully. At first I thought he was drunk; but though he could hardly speak, he gave me to understand he had been knocked down and robbed of a great deal of money; so I helped him up, and got him into a coach, which he ordered into Lincoln’s Inn Fields.”

“ And did not he make any enquiries, or desire you to make any researches for his companion?” rejoined Lord Fitzarran.

“ He said he was not alone when he was knocked down, Sir; but he was too faint to talk much.”

“ And what did you do in consequence of what you had learned?” asked an Officer.

“ I went to my duty again, Sir.”

“ Why you seem to be of great use,” said the Earl. “ Where was you when the gentleman was robbed; and how came you not

not to know when suspicious people are lurking about ?”

“ I was going my round, I dare say, when the robbery was committed, Sir. And where would have been the sense of making a bustle when I found the gentleman ? He had lain there above an hour, he told me.”

“ Do shew me where,” cried the Earl.

The watchman led the party to a dark corner, which he affirmed to be the very exact spot where he had found the Counsellor.

A general search now took place in all the adjacent passages, and in every corner where there was a chance that Montague might have been thrown, had those audacious villains knocked him on the head, or otherwise murdered him. But after the most minute inspection, not a single drop of blood could they discern, which rather led the Earl to hope he had not been absolutely made away with ; except indeed he had

had been dragged down the passage, and thrown into the Thames.

The watchman was, however, ready to swear that had not happened, as, after having been to the water's-edge, he could discern no traces of any person having been dragged along, as the Earl feared; and it was very odd, he observed, that no blood had been spilt, nor no noise had been made during such an affray, as the Officers, knowing Montague was armed, presumed he had made some resistance.

They were returning towards the carriage, endeavouring to frame some plausible story to quiet Lady Delmont's well-grounded fears, the Officers declaring they would not rest till they were at the bottom of this iniquitous business, and the Earl vowing he would, in conjunction with Lord St. Osyth, move heaven and earth, but he would find his beloved grandson; when, to the no small astonishment of the Officers, they

they heard the drums beating to arms, which obliged them to run to their posts, wondering why they were thus called out.

The Earl hurried back to Lady Delmont, and reached the coach just as a fire-engine was driving full gallop past it.

“Have you gained any tidings of Lord Delmont?” she exclaimed, the moment she caught sight of him, totally regardless of the bustle around her.

“There is every reason to suppose he is gone in pursuit of the villains who wounded his father,” he replied; “but I can’t divine the cause of the Guards being called out so early.”

“There is a riot in the Borough, we have been told, my Lord,” said the footman. “The soldiers are ordered out to quell the mob, who have set fire to several houses.”

“Surely Montague is not gone upon this dangerous service?” said her Ladyship.

“There

“ There is not the slightest chance of his being exposed to any fresh dangers through the rising of this mob,” replied the Earl.

“ This seems to be truly a night of trouble.”

“ We may justly say so,” replied his Lordship, getting into the coach.

“ Shall we go that way ?”

“ By no means,” said he ; “ I am convinced we have nothing to hope from such a step, and may have a great deal to fear. A riot is a very unpleasant sight. We will go home, and endeavour to take a little rest, that we may be enabled to pursue our researches in the morning ; though I really hope Montague’s brother Officers, who have all volunteered their services upon the occasion, will be able to hear of him before we are stirring.”

At that moment another messenger arrived to hasten the march of the troops, who were just setting off. The mob were pulling down houses, and setting fire to furniture :

furniture :—in short, it was difficult to say to what extremities they might not proceed, if they were not immediately dispersed. Two men were already killed.

Lady Delmont fell back in the carriage petrified with horror; and when she could speak, observed, “her husband might be one of these unfortunate victims; his very dress would suffice to enrage the multitude in such a moment of popular frenzy.”

The Earl was unequal to the task of reasoning with her upon these chimerical fears, while he entertained the most serious dread that his idolized grandson was no more; he therefore ordered the coachman home.

“The fire is very plainly to be seen from Westminster Bridge,” said the footman who received the order.

“Then let us get out of sight of it, if possible,” said the Peer. “I sincerely pity
the

the unfortunate sufferers ; I can do no more, so drive home ; we have been sufficiently harassed, terrified, and shocked for one evening."

The coachman put his horses into motion ; but as he was not desired to drive very fast, he did not hurry himself, being anxious to hear some further account of the depredations of this mob. They had therefore scarcely reached Charing Cross, before an Officer upon the full gallop, calling out, " Stop ! stop !" overtook them. His regimental caught Lady Delmont's eye at the moment she was going to let down the glass.

" He is come ! he is come !" she screamed, but a few seconds convinced her of her mistake ; it was the Officer who had succeeded her husband upon duty at midnight. He was, however, the herald of joyful tidings, as he instantly exclaimed—

" Lord

“ Lord Delmont is perfectly safe, and will be at home very speedily ! I mounted my horse the moment the alarm was given, and found him holding forth in the midst of the mob, who, I am of opinion, he will persuade to disperse before the military reach the scene of action. But I can't stop to say another word,” setting off back again as hard as he had come.

The overjoyed Earl and the enraptured wife, were instantly silently enfolded in each other's arms, mentally returning thanks where they were most due, for the preservation of their adored Delmont.

“ Now did not I tell you all along that no mischief would befall him ?” said the Earl, when he could speak. “ From the moment I discovered he was my grandson, I have thought he has been the peculiar care of Providence.”

“ I was also right, my dear Sir,” rejoined Lady Delmont ; “ I had a presentiment that he

he was concerned in this riot. Do let us drive that way; there can be no more danger for us than for him; so let me entreat we may go in search of him."

"I think we had better hasten home," replied the Earl; "we may miss him by driving into the Borough; we shall therefore probably accelerate our wishes by returning into Park Lane. He must be sensible how anxious we have been for his safety; and if he should not be at home as soon as we are, which I fully expect, I will post away to every likely place to meet with him."

"Lady Delmont agreed there was great truth in all he said; still she wished to drive over Westminster Bridge. Montague would certainly come that way, and thus there would be little fear of not meeting him; besides, they could stop while they sent the footman in search of him. Captain Villars would certainly be able to direct him to his master."

The

The Earl found it impossible to withstand her entreaties ; the coachman was therefore ordered to turn round, and they drove towards the bridge, forming a thousand conjectures concerning the cause of this riot, and how Montague came to be concerned in it. He must have pursued the villains who had tried to rob him, and whom he probably thought had killed his father ; and thus had occasioned a crowd to assemble, which was magnified into a mob, who perhaps had not committed half the excesses so currently reported.

When they reached the centre of the bridge, the Earl ordered the coachman to stop, as he had a very distinct view of a fire, which was rather a confirmation of the former story ; and they heard there had actually been a riot, and some people killed or wounded in St. George's Fields. But before they could learn any farther particulars from the few passing stragglers, or from the watchmen upon duty, the latter advised them

them to return, as the mob seemed to be advancing; and should the troops follow, they might find themselves in a very disagreeable predicament.

Lady Delmont could not suppose they would annoy people who had not injured them. His Lordship had not formed so high an opinion of their politeness; he therefore desired the coachman once more to turn round, observing, "they might else be prevented from getting either backwards or forwards, as he now heard several voices in too elevated a key to make him wish to encounter the speakers."

The coachman, still very curious, pulled up by the side of the pavement as soon as he had turned, observing, it would be most prudent to let the people he perceived advancing, take the lead of them, as they kept the middle of the way, and seemed rather riotously inclined."

He

He had scarcely given his advice, before about a dozen ill-looking fellows made a sudden stop, upon some one amongst them calling out, "Hold!" in the well-known voice of Montague.

The Earl's head, nay half his body, was instantly out of the coach window.

"My dear grandfather!" cried he, "how sorry——"

Three loud cheers, addressed to the Earl, prevented him from proceeding. A general shout of "Here is our brave Captain—we have got him out of the bilboes!" followed this salutation.

Montague confirmed their assertion.—These brave fellows had effected his liberty, and had insisted upon seeing him safe home, for fear he should be waylaid a second time.

Lady

Lady Delmont pushed forward while he was speaking; and it being sufficiently light to afford her a tolerable view of her husband and his party, her joy was not a little damped by perceiving he had got a black eye, and several other bruises in his face; which was, notwithstanding, cleaner than any other part about him, as his dress was soiled, and in the greatest disorder; and he was up to the middle of his legs in dirt. Still to see him at all was rapture, when compared to her feelings during the late horrid uncertainty respecting his fate. She pressed the hand he gave her to her lips, but found it impossible to utter a word expressive of her satisfaction.

Being very anxious to get rid of his riotous, though brave escort, Montague told them the lady was his wife, and the gentleman his grandfather; he therefore requested they would suffer him to go home with them, desiring they would call in Park Lane any time after eleven that forenoon,

when he would endeavour to reward them for the protection they had afforded him.

“ I promise every man of you ten guineas,” said the Earl, “ in addition to my grandson’s bounty !”

“ Oh how sweet that dear little brogue sounds in my Irish ears,” cried one of the party ; “ we are most of us your Lordship’s countrymen, and would all have been murdered, do you see, before your grandson should have come to any harm. To be sure, it was an Irish lad gave him those ugly thumps upon his face ; but we have done for the spalpeen ; he won’t be after kidnapping another great man in a hurry ! The devil burn me if he ought not to have been roasted by the fire we made of his goods.”

The Earl, who was all impatience to have Montague to himself, stopped the eloquent orator, by requesting he would let Lord Delmont get into the carriage, and not fail
coming

coming into Park Lane according to appointment.

Montague advised their immediately going quietly home, for fear they should finish so glorious a night in the watchhouse, or get into the custody of the military. They promised to obey his orders, and suffered him to get into the coach without even a parting cheer, upon his expressing a wish that they would reserve all such marks of their politeness till they waited upon him in the morning.

“ Now what has befallen you, my jewel of a boy ? ” eagerly demanded the Earl, who had made Montague seat himself between him and his wife ; and as if fearful of again losing him, had locked the arm next him within his own, while he hastily recapitulated the commencement, progress, and termination of their alarms respecting his safety.

Lord Delmont having put his other arm round his enraptured wife, now enquired whether his father was much hurt ?

“ His head is tied up,” replied his Lordship, “ and he complains of having been stunned by a blow which brought him to the ground, where he laid for an hour or more, before he came to himself, when, as I have already told you, he was put into a coach by a watchman, and had hardly recovered his senses when we left him. So now please to tell us what you did after he was laid low ?”

“ Most willingly. My father called upon me about half past ten, and requested I would accompany him into Scotland Yard, where he was going to see a gentleman who had taken refuge within the verge of Court; entering into various details respecting the Board of Green Cloth, &c. to which I paid but little attention. We crossed the street, and proceeded under the gateway down a large court, so remarkably dark and dismal,
that

that coming out of a very light room, I could scarcely see my way.

‘ Only follow me,’ said my father, upon my making the remark; ‘ I am thoroughly acquainted with the road.’

“ I obeyed in silence, till suddenly stopping, he exclaimed—

‘ I believe we have got too far.’

“ The words had scarcely escaped from his lips, before he was laid at my feet by a sudden blow, and my arms were almost at the same moment pinioned behind me, to prevent my drawing my sword, I presumed; and a gag being forced into my mouth, I was effectually silenced. I was then dragged along between two of these ruffians down the long passage you visited, and finally down the stairs which led to the Thames. A boat was in waiting, into which I was forced, after being handcuffed, and was held down by two of my companions, while the third rowed us to the opposite shore. The moment our bark was aground, the rower stepped out, and was absent for half an hour,

or more. He then returned to inform his companions, who had never left their hold of me, that all was ready. I was now requested to land, having been previously wrapped in a long loose cloak; and as a farther security, a thick handkerchief was tied over my eyes; though they repeatedly assured me, if I allowed them to conduct me quietly, they had no intention to hurt me. They had so effectually disabled me from making any resistance, I was perforce obliged to follow their advice. It was almost knee-deep in mud where we landed, and for near ten minutes I proceeded thus blindfolded, between my two conductors, when we reached a rough pavement. They then, owing to my having stumbled several times, chose to allow me the use of my eyes. I was scarcely released from my bandage, before one of my companions called out, 'Open the door;' and upon turning the corner of a dirty street, I perceived a coach in waiting, the driver of which called out, 'So, my lads, you have
got

got him!'—I immediately concluded that this fellow had been told some plausible story to engage his assistance in their iniquitous plot. He was ordered to make haste, and in consequence whipped his horses most unmercifully, I could hear. The blinds were put up instead of the glasses, and I was seated between the same two men who had taken charge of me from the first. In less than a quarter of an hour, according to my calculation, the coach stopped, and the driver began to bawl out, 'Gate, gate!' Every thing around me being very quiet, I heard a dispute at a distance. A sudden thought struck me. My feet being still at liberty, I began to kick with all my might; and in return for my exertions, I received the blows of which I still bear the marks. The violent scuffle within the coach occasioned, as I had hoped, an enquiry respecting its cause; but being unable to make my situation known, my companions swore I was a deserter that they had been forced to gag and handcuff; and with this account, the

people whom I had endeavoured to interest in my favour, appeared satisfied, notwithstanding all I could do to make them understand that they were imposed upon. The parley being, to my infinite mortification, soon over, the coach was suffered to proceed, but stopped a second time within a few hundred yards of this gate; and upon the door being opened, I was hurried into a house, and down a very deep damp cellar, the door of which was barred upon me, and I was left to my reflections. I soon heard the coach drive off, and also distinguished a sort of humming noise at a distance, which I supposed to be occasioned by the disputants, who had been so easily satisfied respecting my fate, having renewed their quarrel.

“ For two hours, or more, I continued to pace my dreary prison, in a state of mind which baffles all description; when I heard a noise over my head, which increased every succeeding moment. In hopes this might prove the forerunner of my deliverance, and

and fearful that those who had brought me into the house might deny my being there, I began to kick as hard as I was able against my prison door.

“The noise above grew still more violent, and at last I heard the discharge of fire-arms. Such an uproar then ensued, that I expected every moment to be buried under the ruins of the house, which it appeared to me was being pulled down; but in less than ten minutes my prison door flew open, my repeated efforts to force the bars and bolts having directed my deliverers where to find me. A general shout proclaimed their success, and several questions were addressed to me before they discovered my inability to answer them. This impediment being removed, I was able to thank the brave fellows, and to request they would disencumber me of my cloak and handcuffs.

“Why look ye, young chap,” said the Irishman who treated you with a specimen

of his eloquence, 'that depends upon circumstances; if you have really deserted without some special good cause, why we shall take upon us to deliver you up to the punishment you deserve, as we respect the laws of old England I promise you.'

" Their proceedings were certainly very accordant with this declaration. However, I found no difficulty, now, I was able to explain myself, in rendering them even enthusiasts in my cause. The appearance of my regimentals pleaded also powerfully in my behalf; and I was conducted in triumph to a neighbouring public-house, where the eleven men you have seen had been spending the evening, not in the most sober manner. I readily told them my name and rank, but could not satisfy them respecting the villains' intentions, who had forced me from Scotland Yard, and finally confined me in the dungeon from whence I had just emerged.

" The

“ The Irishman who addressed your Lordship, and who seemed to be the ring-leader of the party, swore he would go and fetch the spalpeens to answer for themselves. Several of his companions went to assist in securing them; and during the interval, I requested those who remained behind, would inform me what really induced them to break into the house where I was confined, after having suffered the coach to proceed without molestation?

‘ Why your Honour must know,’ replied one of them, ‘ we all spent the evening at this house, drinking, and such-like, and were going home at midnight, when a quarrel arose about paying the reckoning; and two of my companions were preparing to fight it out, when the hackney-coach which brought you, stopped at the turnpike. The keeper of the gate was in the ring that had been made, so you know the coachman was forced to call twice before the gate was opened; and while he was paying the toll, we heard the bustle in the

M 6

coach.

coach. But you know all that passed when we stopped it; for not having settled our own dispute, we did not much attend to what the fellows said, but took it for granted that you was a deserter. Well, and so, your Honour, after a perilous dispute, and a desperate hot battle, which lasted better than half an hour, we all returned into the house, to make it up over a fresh bowl. This made us set into drinking afresh, when who should come in but the turnpike man to get a dram to keep the cold out; and so we began to ask him about the deserter in the coach.—‘Why,’ says he, ‘I an’t much of opinion it was a deserter, because there would have been no need to have taken so many precautions with a runaway soldier.’—This made us all prick up our ears, and wish we had not let the coach go forward without a stricter enquiry. So we asked the man if he knew where your Honour had been taken to? Not many hundred yards off, he said, but it was no business of his. However, to make short of my story,

story, at last it came out, for we had been questioning the landlord, his wife, maid, and the tap-boy, that the man who kept the house where you had been carried, was neither more nor less than a kidnapper, who had ensnared many a honest lad, and forced them on board Indiamen, or worse. Well, this was enough for us; we were all pretty well primed, and, faith! we determined to rescue you at all hazards. So out we sallied, making the tap-boy shew us the house where this rogue carried on his pranks, and there we knocked. No one answered, and yet we saw a light moving backwards and forwards up stairs. Well, we knocked again and again, and called and whooped, but all to no purpose; so being quite out of patience, we swore we would break the door in, if it was not immediately opened. Upon this a man put his head out of the upper window. 'That's the master of the house,' whispered the tap-boy; while he asked us, in a mighty surly tone, what we all wanted.— To

see the deserter,' we called out.—'If you don't all go about your business,' says he, 'I will be d——d if I don't fettle a few of you presently; you only want to rob my house; so mind, I will fire upon you if you don't make off.'

'Provoked, as well we might, you know, Sir, to be called thieves, we paid no regard to his threats, but proceeded to knock the door in, which was fastened as if it was never intended to be opened again. While we were thus employed, having called out, 'Who is there?' three times, he fired upon us without any further ceremony. Three pistols were discharged, and one we saw would not go off. Two of the balls hit my companions, but did not disable them from continuing their work; and the road facing the door having been very lately mended with some tolerable large stones, we all began to smash the upper windows, where we perceived three men reloading their pistols, and, notwithstanding their fire-arms, we soon made them scower off. I suppose we
have

have half filled the room with stones. Whether we have hurt any body I can't take upon me to say ; but finding they did not offer to return to the charge, while some stood guard ready to throw in case they did venture to shew their faces, the others knocked in the shop windows, which were much easier to force than the door, and we all rushed in together, expecting a fresh attack. But as all seemed very quiet, except a noise that proceeded from the cellar, we thought we did not chuse to go up stairs till we had seen what that meant ; and there we found your Honour ; and you know all that has passed since as well as I do."

" The various noises I had heard were thus perfectly accounted for," proceeded Montague ; " and I was endeavouring to express my sense of the real service these well-meaning fellows had done me, when the rest of the party returned, dragging in a man very much disfigured with bruises, but

but who refused to speak when I questioned him. I was therefore ordering my new acquaintance to deliver him into the custody of the watchman, when, after a little previous whispering, the Irishman, scratching his head, hoped I would be pleased to stand their friend, should they get into trouble in consequence of what they had done to serve me; for they really believed one or other of them, it was impossible to say which, had been so unlucky as to give the kidnapper his death-wound, for he could neither move nor speak.

“ I readily promised them my protection, as justice appeared on their side; telling them they had merely made use of stones in their own defence against fire-arms, and that my representations, in their favour would certainly meet with proper credit. They were scarcely recovered from the serious fears they began to entertain, before the tap-boy came running in to tell us that some more men had been found in the house.

house. I was not less anxious than my deliverers to see my fellow-sufferers, therefore accompanied them to the place of my late confinement, and found more than a hundred people assembled round three young lads, who looked, and complained of being half starved. They had been decoyed under various pretences, and had been confined in a sort of cellar, or dust-hole, under the back yard, where it was impossible for them to make themselves heard by the neighbours; nor would they have been discovered in the recent bustle, but for a dog sniffing at the trap-door which communicated with their dungeon. I fairly shuddered when I was conducted to see the horrid hole from whence they had been taken, and very unthinkingly exclaimed, 'No punishment can be adequate to the crimes of such wretches, who are a disgrace to human nature.'

"The mob, for such it might now be called, taking my unguarded speech for an encourage-

encouragement to proceed to any extremity, instantly began to strip the house, and to make a bonfire of the furniture before the door, and absolutely talked of throwing the now senseless master into the midst of the flames. However, I prevailed upon them to convey him to the public-house, where a long debate ensued, as to whether he was, or was not dead. Some of the neighbours affirmed that he was only sulky; but I believe he has concluded his career in iniquity.

“ I ordered a surgeon to be sent for, and consigned both the culprits to the care of the master of the house, and a constable, who had been called to quell the mob. The third rascal was not to be found; most probably he made his escape when he heard that the door, or rather window, was forced. I was really shocked to see the flames every moment increasing, as the mob kept spiriting each other up, and were constantly adding fuel to the bonfire.

“ The

“ The peace-officers proving of no avail, the military were sent for ; and as I found it vain to point out the danger they were so wantonly incurring, I wished to have taken leave of so riotous a set ;—but my deliverers were unwilling to lose sight of me, though I am convinced they did not think I had been imposing upon them ; still they were very curious to know what could have led this kidnapping serjeant, for such I found was his title, to commit so daring an attempt upon a man, who they must suppose would be very anxiously sought after, and whose detention must, if discovered, be attended with such very serious consequences to every one concerned in the plot.

“ I was at an equal loss to account for his behaviour, and was proposing to my first champions to see me home, when Captain Villars galloped up to announce the arrival of the military.

“ He

“He declared his surprise could only equal his pleasure at seeing me, hastily informing me how anxious you both were for my safety, and kindly offering to return and inform you that I was still in the land of the living, while I once more harangued the mob, who now thought it most prudent to disperse; and by way of keeping them out of any farther mischief, I set off with my eleven brave fellows, and need not tell you how and where I met my two dearest and best friends.”

“I certainly owe my present happiness to the immediate interposition of Providence in your behalf, my beloved Montague,” said Lady Delmont. “I positively tremble even now to reflect what might have been your fate.”

“May Heaven bless and prosper the brave fellows who rescued you out of such dreadful hands!” cried the Earl, as the coach drove up to their own door.

Every

Every servant participated in Lord Fitzarran's and Lady Delmont's happiness. The former embraced his grandson the moment they were within the saloon, and shed tears of joy, exclaiming, "Who could have laid so deep a plan? Have you the slightest guess?"

"Upon my honour I have not, Sir; nor did I know I had an enemy so much to be feared. What was to be done with me I cannot yet fathom!"

"Oh don't dwell upon the horrid idea!" interrupted Lady Delmont.

The Earl sighed, and paced the room, muttering something to himself; then observed, "Scotland Yard is a very strange place to be chosen as a rendezvous for kidnappers! It is still more wonderful their daring to attack two such men!"

"The whole affair might originate in a mistake, Sir," replied Montague.

"True,

“ True, true ! ” replied the Earl, continuing to pace the room ; “ but by Jafus I will clear up this mistake before I am many days older ! But an’t you half starved, and had not we better fend for a surgeon ? ”

Lady Delmont strongly feconded the laft propofal.

“ If I thought there was the flighteft neceffity to have recourfe to medical affiftance, I really would make no objection,” faid Montague ; “ but my bruises are of the moft trifling nature. I have already, in purfuance of my deliverers’ advice, bathed them with brandy, and have drank a fmall quantity of the fame cordial, by way of completing the cure.”

“ You-did very right,” rejoined the Peer ; “ and I do not intend to forget the turnpike man, whofe fcruples about interfering in what did not concern him, were highly criminal. I fhall read him a fhort lecture,

lecture, that may prove of service to him. But if you are averse to having any advice, we ought all to take something previous to our retiring to bed, where we will endeavour for a few hours to forget this mysterious affair."

Lady Delmont proposed tea, which was immediately ordered. It was being brought in, when Henry Melcombe, breathless from the speed he had made, ran into the room. His countenance bespoke his joy, but he was some seconds before he could give it utterance, or do more than forcibly press the hand Montague had presented him. When a little recovered, he informed them he was not at home when Lady Delmont's messenger came into Bridge Street, having continued all the evening, and much later than he had intended, with the party with whom he had dined, declaring he had never been more shocked than when he learned, upon his return home, the anxiety
which

which Lord Fitzarran and Lady Delmont experienced respecting his friend's safety. In compliance with the message he had received, he had first hastened to the Horse Guards; there he had heard that Lord Delmont was certainly alive, well, and gone home; in consequence of which pleasing intelligence, he had run every step of the way into Park Lane."

"Then now sit down and have some tea, you young rake," said the Earl, with a half smile.

"Very willingly, my Lord; but what has happened, my dear friend, and how came you by those bruises?"

"I received them in a strange sort of scuffle," replied Montague.

"You are too fatigued to enter into any details just now," rejoined the Earl; "besides you must be in want of rest, as well as your wife. I will satisfy this young gentleman's curiosity if he will but have a little patience."

Since

Since Lord Delmont is safe, I am more than half satisfied. But have you heard of the riot in St. George's Fields? I was told all the houses were, or had been in a blaze!"

"We have both heard and seen it," replied the Earl; "but all your houses were, in fact, nothing more than a few old trumpery chairs and tables."

"How people are given to exaggerate!" observed Henry.

"Very true," said his Lordship, "particularly in such cases.—But now I must insist upon your retiring, Lady Delmont; and you shall follow your wife's example, Montague. The sight of you has rendered me insensible of my late fatigue, nor did I ever feel less inclination to sleep; so go along both of you:—leave Henry and me to talk over the events of this memorable evening; and may the Almighty bless and preserve my dear boy from all the future snares and machinations of his

enemies! Only let me be once at the bottom of this iniquitous plot, then may the vengeance of Heaven light on me if I spare either friends or foes!"

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